

LONE WOLF AND CUB

子連水狼

VOLUME 26

STRUGGLE IN
THE DARK

By KAZUO KOIKE
& GOSEKI KOJIMA



*the hundred and
twenty-eighth*

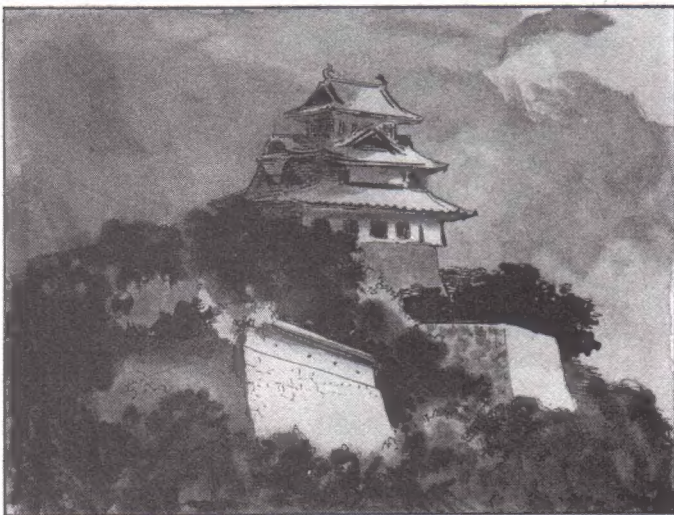
Tales of the Grass: Nindō Ukon



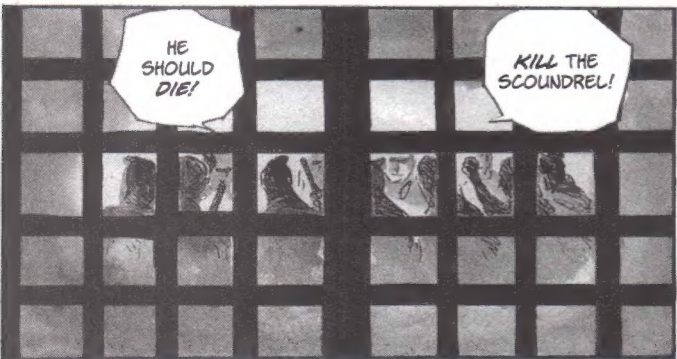
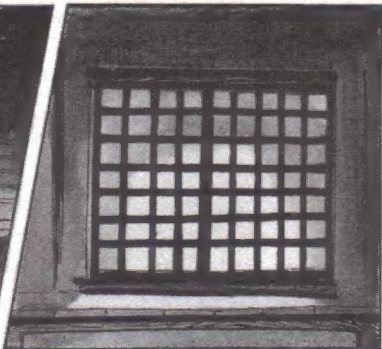
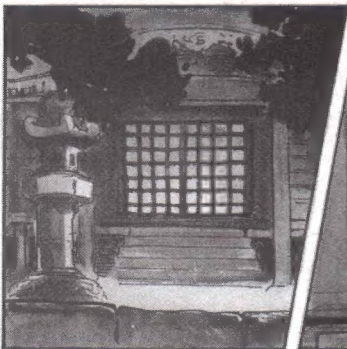
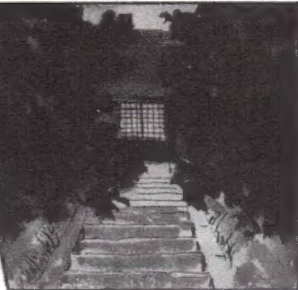
NUMATA HILL, STRETCHING FROM
MOUNT AKAGI THROUGH OZE AND
TOKURA TO THE BORDERS OF AIZU
ON THE WEST, SHINSHŪ ON THE
NORTH, ECHIGO AND THE MOUNTAIN
WALL OF JŌETSU. A NATURAL
FORTRESS AT THE CONFLUENCE OF
THE TONE AND KATASHINA RIVERS,
NUMATA WAS THE CORNERSTONE
OF NORTHERN KŌZUKE.



NUMATA HAN
LORD TOKI
YAMASHIRO-NO-KAMI
SADAMINE THIRTY-FIVE
THOUSAND KOKU



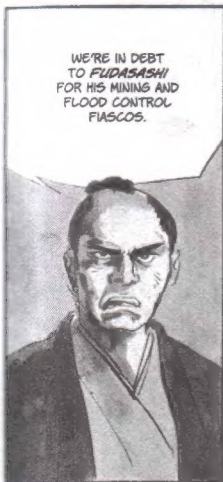




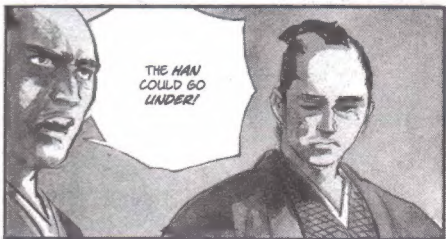
KARŌ YOSHIDA
SHUZEN'S GONE
TOO FAR!



WE'RE IN DEBT
TO FUDASASHI
FOR HIS MINING AND
FLOOD CONTROL
FIASCOS.

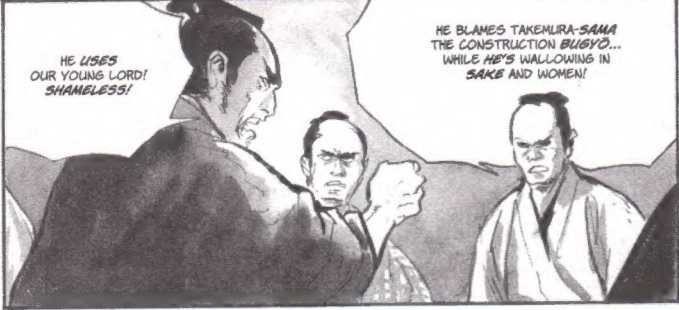


THE HAN
COULD GO
UNDER!



HE'S PUT
HIS PUPPETS
IN EVERY KEY
POST.



A black and white comic panel showing three men in traditional Japanese attire. The man on the left is in the foreground, seen from the side, shouting. The man in the middle is facing him with a determined, angry expression. The man on the right is standing slightly behind, also looking on with a serious expression. The background is simple, suggesting an outdoor setting.

HE USES
OUR YOUNG LORD!
SHAMELESS!

HE BLAMES TAKEMURA-SAMA
THE CONSTRUCTION BUGYŌ...
WHILE HE'S WALLOWING IN
SAKE AND WOMEN!

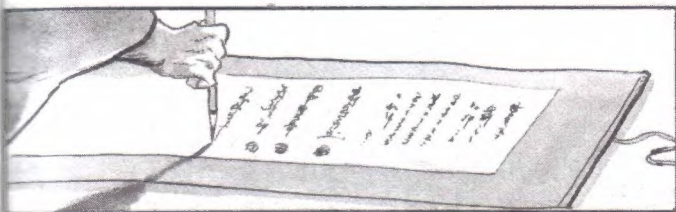
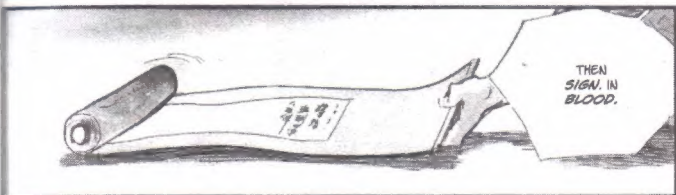
A black and white comic panel showing two men in a physical confrontation. The man on the left is wearing a light-colored robe and is shouting while holding a sword. The man on the right is wearing a dark robe and is also shouting, holding a sword. They are both looking at each other with intense anger. The background is simple, suggesting an outdoor setting.

KILL
HIM!

REFORM
THE HAN! KILL
YOSHIDA!

A black and white comic panel showing a group of men in traditional Japanese attire gathered around a table. They are all looking at a central figure who is speaking. The scene is dimly lit, with candles providing light. The men have serious expressions, and the atmosphere appears tense.

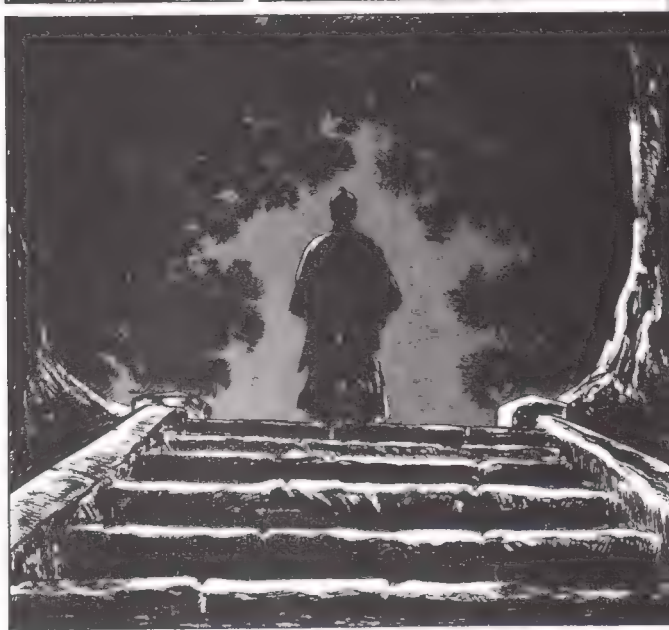
VERY
WELL.

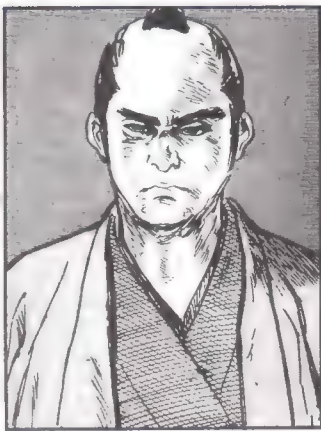
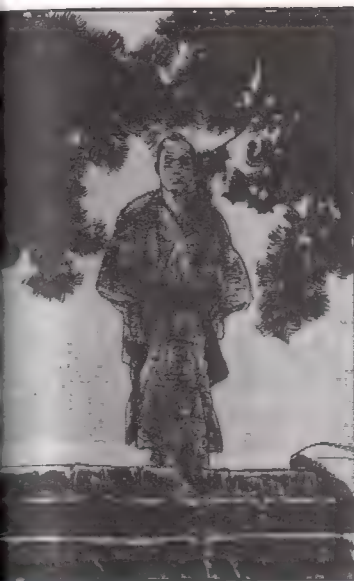




NOW, LEAVE
SECRETLY. ONE
BY ONE.

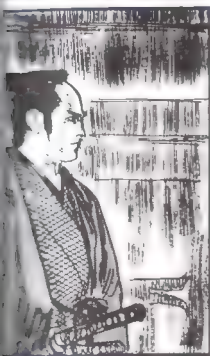
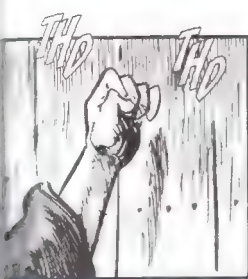


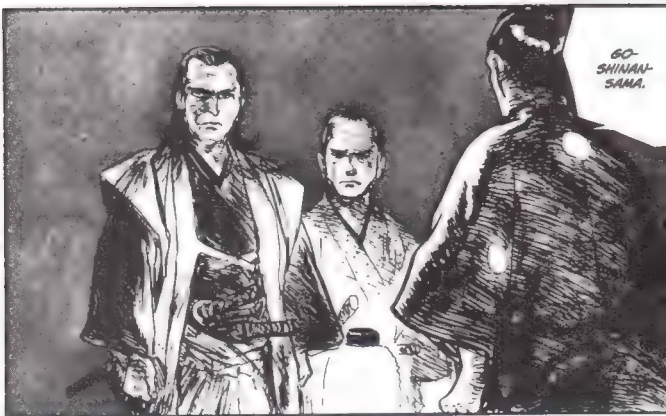






YOSHIDA





GO-
SHINAN-
SAMA.



NINDŌ,
EH? WHAT'S
UP?



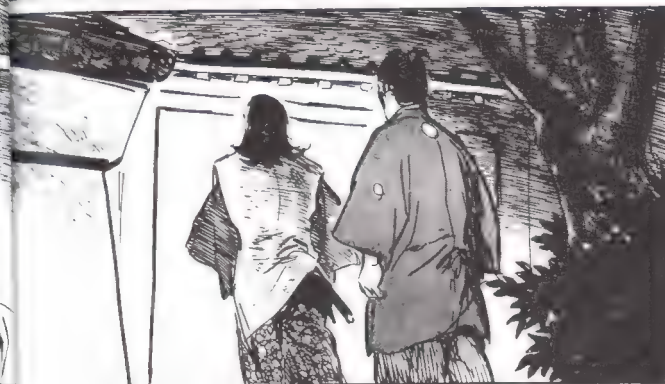
IT'S
FOR THE
GO-KARŌ'S
EARS ONLY,
SIR.

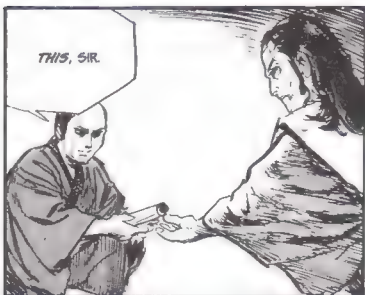
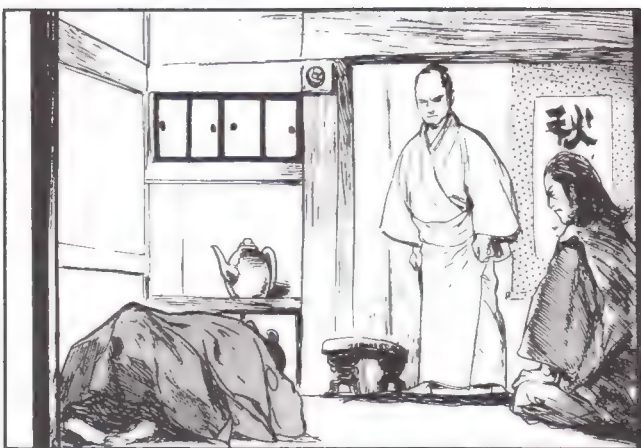


HRMM...
THEN, YOUR
SWORDS.



AND I HAVE
TO SEARCH
FOR HIDDEN
WEAPONS.



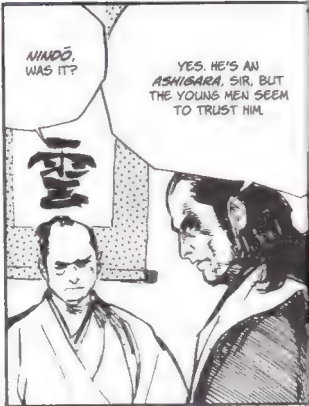






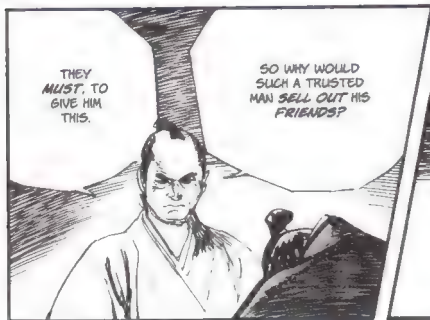
THEY
GAVE THIS
TO YOU?

YES,
SIR.



NINDŌ,
WAS IT?

YES. HE'S AN
ASHISARA, SIR, BUT
THE YOUNG MEN SEEM
TO TRUST HIM.



THEY
MUST, TO
GIVE HIM
THIS.

SO WHY WOULD
SUCH A TRUSTED
MAN SELL OUT HIS
FRIENDS?



BETRAYAL.
A BUSHI'S
GREATEST
SHAME...



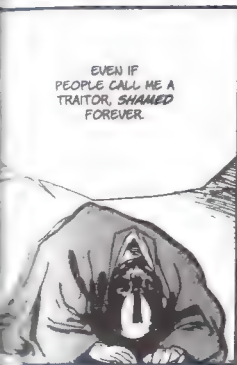
SIR! DISLOYALTY IS
WORSE THAN BETRAYAL.
BETRAYED FEALTY
DESERVES A THOUSAND
DEATHS.

I TRIED
TO SHOW THEM
IT WAS DISLOYAL TO
ATTACK OUR LORD'S
GO-KARŌ...



BUT I
FAILED.

SO
I CAME HERE...
TO PUT OUT THE
WILDFIRE BEFORE
IT SPREADS.



EVEN IF
PEOPLE CALL ME A
TRAITOR, SHAMED
FOREVER.

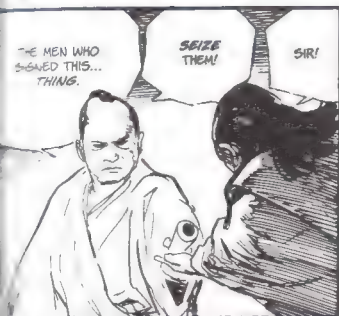


WELL SAID!
WHAT SPIRIT!
AND NOT IN
VAIN.



HIYAMIZU!

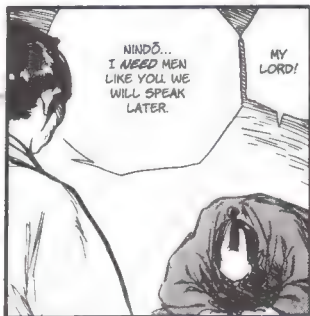
SIR?



THE MEN WHO
SIGNED THIS...
THING.

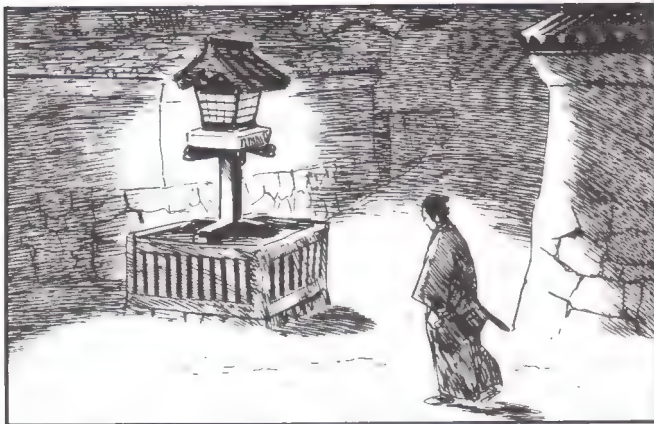
SEIZE
THEM!

SIR!



NINDŌ...
I NEED MEN
LIKE YOU. WE
WILL SPEAK
LATER.

MY
LORD!





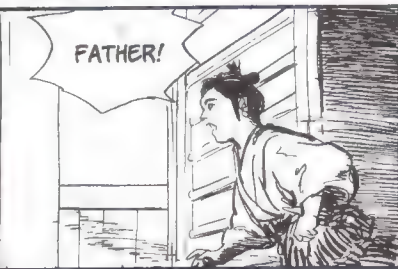
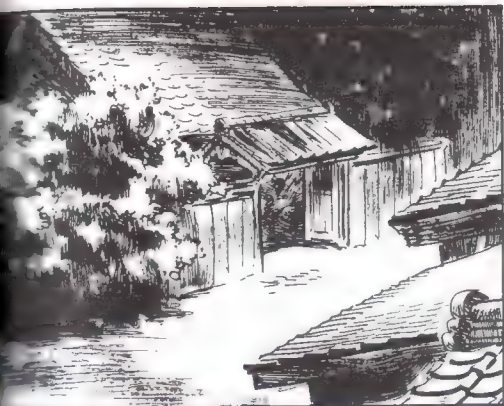


NO!!
NOT NOW!



THUD THUD THUD







I SAW
WOLF
FIRE!



I KNOW.
DON'T
PANIC.



GET YOUR
TRAVEL GEAR,
SHINTARÔ. GO
TO MOUNT
KOKUZÔ.



LAUNCH
THE SIGNAL
JUST AS I
TAUGHT
YOU.

AND THEN
WAIT.

YES,
FATHER.



IF I'M NOT
THERE IN FOUR
HOURS, GO
TO EDO.

YES,
SIR.



AND TAKE
YOUR MOTHER'S
IHAI!



YES,
FATHER!





NINDŌ
UKON! FOR THE
GO-KARŌ!



WHERE
IS HIYAMIZU-
SAMAP?

HE TOOK
ALL HIS MEN AND
WENT AFTER THE
REBELS!



СЮКК

БУАНН!



B-BASTARD...
TRICKED ME...!



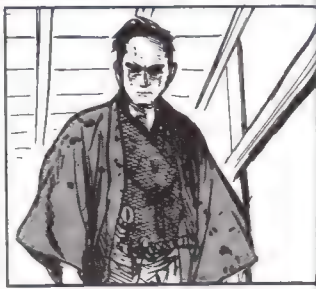
ACT LIKE...
TRAITOR...

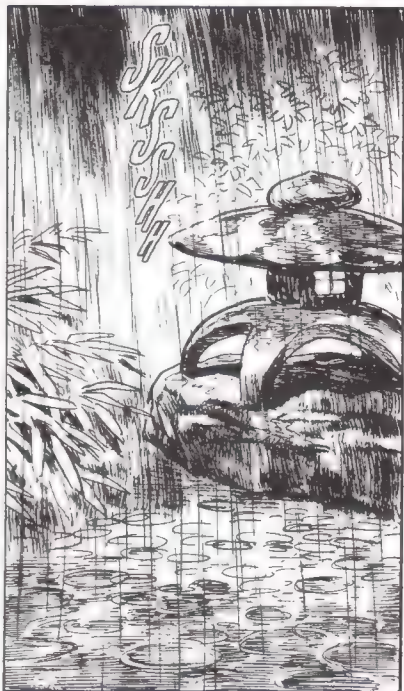
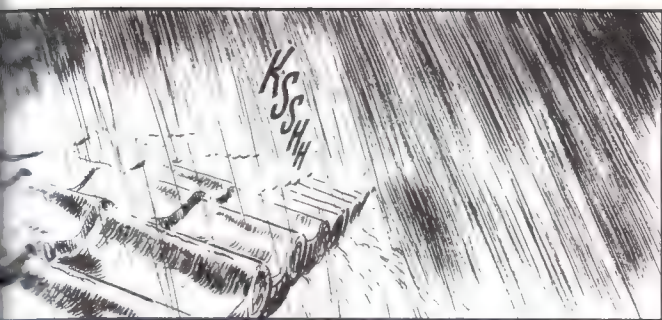
MADE ME...
SEND AWAY...
HIYAMIZU...



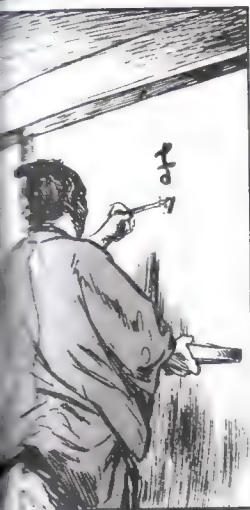
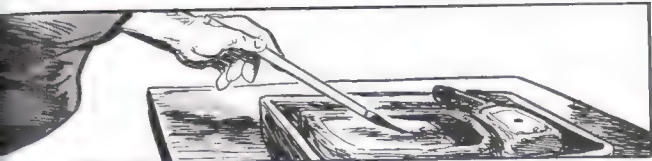
WRONG,
MY LORD. I
HAD TO.











"I PUNISHED
YOSHIDA
SHUZEN. I'VE
FLED THE HAN.
NINDO UKON

吉田主膳を謀殺し
脱藩すもつ也
忍び石近

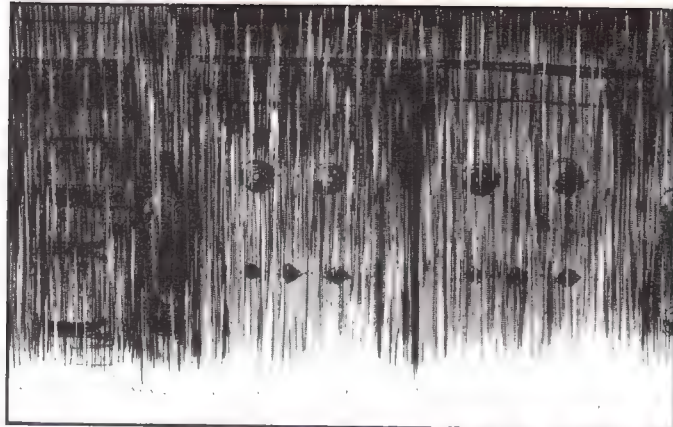


I DIDN'T
HATE YOU,
SIR.

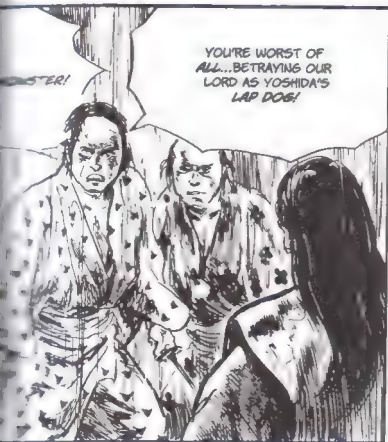


I HAD
TO DO IT.
EVERYTHING.

MY
APOLO-
GIES.







BUT...
YOU DON'T
HAVE ANY
PROOF.

HEH, HEH...
SORRY. THE
GO-KARŌ HAS
YOUR BLOOD
PLEDGE!



WHAT
...?!



SURPRISED...?
NINDŌ BROUGHT
IT TO HIM.



N-
NINDŌ-
SAMA
...?!

YOU
LIE!!

HEH...
HOW ELSE
COULD I
FIND YOU?

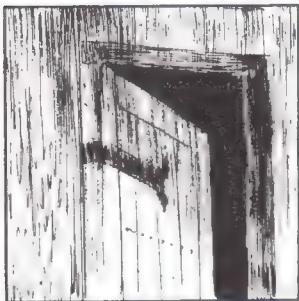


AHH...?!

NINDŌ...YOU
TRAITOR!!

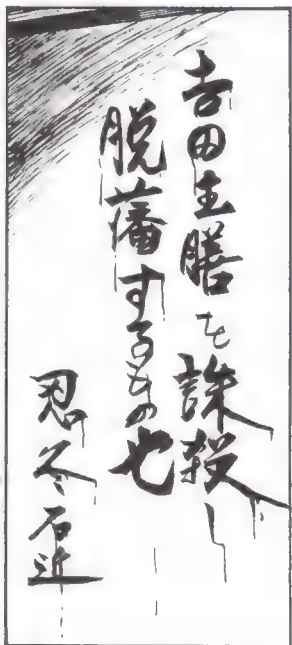








GO-KARŌ...



吉田主膳を誅殺
脱藩するもの也

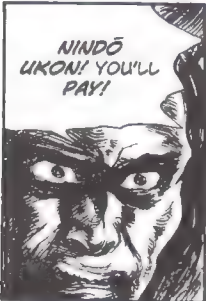
忍冬石蓮



DAMN
YOU...

YOU
PLANNED
IT.

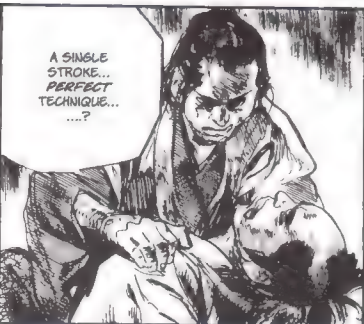
PLAYING THE
TRAITOR. LURING
ME AWAY WITH THAT
LIST. AND WHILE I
WAS GONE...



NINDŌ
UKON! YOU'LL
PAY!



WAIT...?

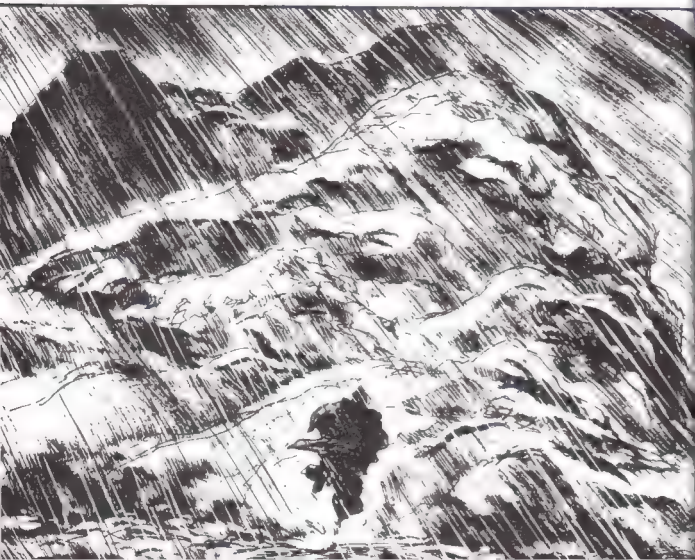


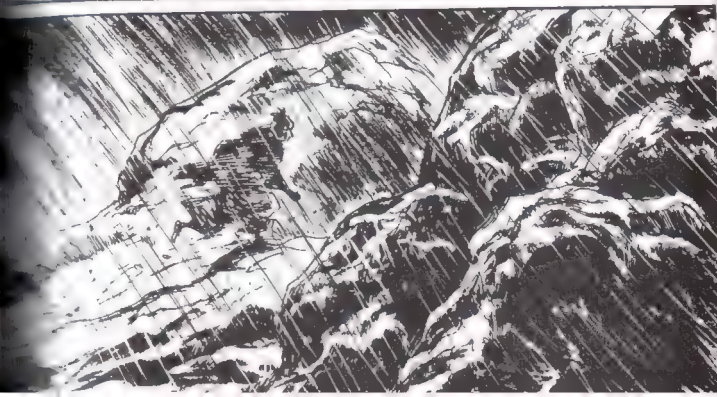
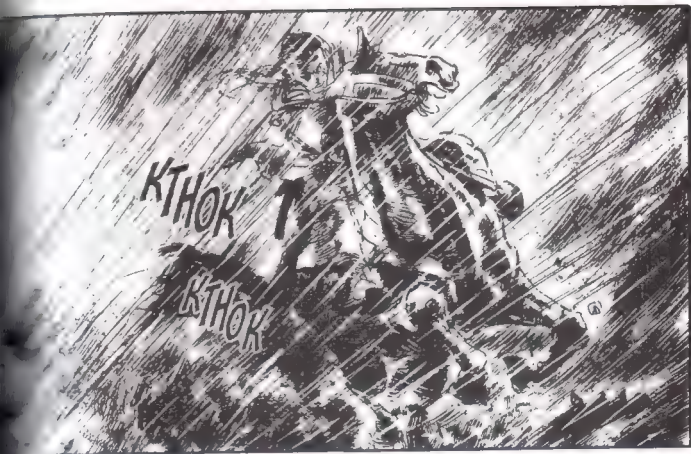
A SINGLE
STROKE...
PERFECT
TECHNIQUE...
....?



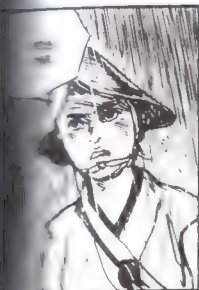
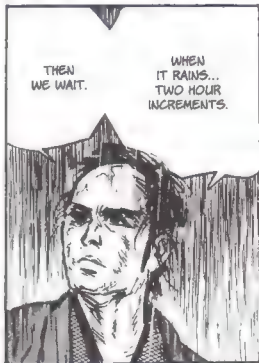
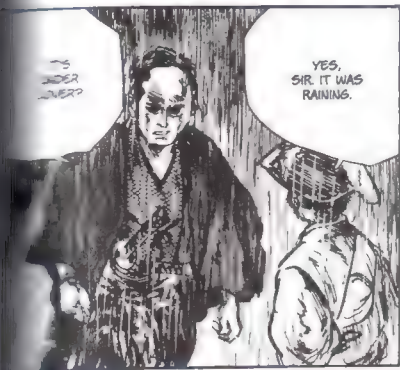
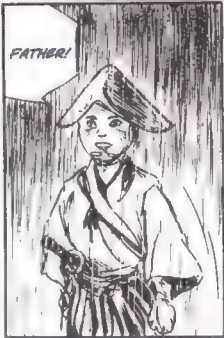
MY HORSE!













GO
ON AHEAD,
SON.

BUT,
FATHER



EVEN IF I
DON'T MAKE
IT...

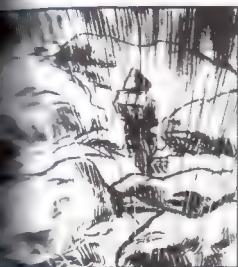
...I'VE TAUGHT YOU
ALL OUR SECRETS.
YOU'RE GREEN, BUT
YOU'RE GRASS. DO
YOUR DUTY!



NOW
GO!

Y-YES
SIR!





OLD GRASS
DIES! LET
EM SHOOT
BROW!

STOP THE
RAIN!



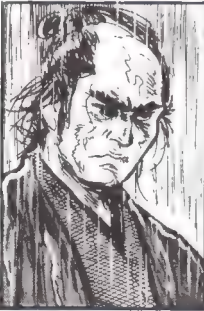
**NINDŌ UKONI!
YOU'RE YABYŪ
KUSA!**



**I'D HEARD
RUMORS...**



**NINJA!
WAITING,
HIDDEN FOR
GENERATIONS.**



**AND
IT EXPLAINS
EVERYTHING
YOU'VE DONE!**

I'M
UMATA'S
SHUNAN. I
RAINED
YOU.

I KNOW YOUR SWORDWORK—
CLUMSY! AMATEURISH! YET
YOU KILLED THE GO-KARÔ
WITH A SINGLE, FLAWLESS
STROKE!

WHY CONCEAL
SKILL LIKE THAT? IT
WOULDN'T MAKE SENSE.
AND NOT EASY, HIDING
IT FROM YOUR
TEACHER.

I LIVE
BY THE
SWORD...

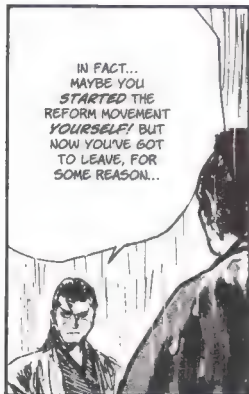
...AND YET,
TO MY SHAME,
I COULDN'T
TELL!

YOU GOT COZY WITH
THE REFORMERS TO GET
YOUR HANDS ON THEIR BLOOD
PLEDGE. YOU WANTED TO
BETRAY THEM BUT
WHY?



FOR A
PROMOTION! A MERE
ASHIGARA COULDN'T
STEAL ANY SECRETS
FOR YOUR YAGYŪ
MASTERS.

IN FACT...
MAYBE YOU
STARTED THE
REFORM MOVEMENT
YOURSELF! BUT
NOW YOU'VE GOT
TO LEAVE, FOR
SOME REASON...

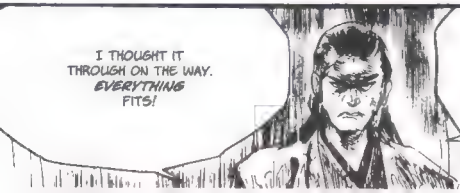


...SO YOU PULL A
FAST ONE. YOU KILL
THE GO-KARŌ LIKE YOU'D
MEANT TO ALL ALONG!
THAT WAY...



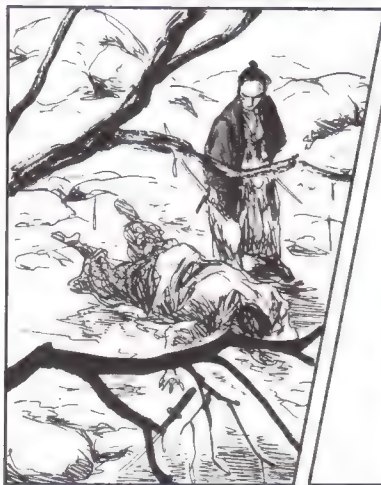
...IT'S
NATURAL
TO RUN!

I THOUGHT IT
THROUGH ON THE WAY.
EVERYTHING
FITS!

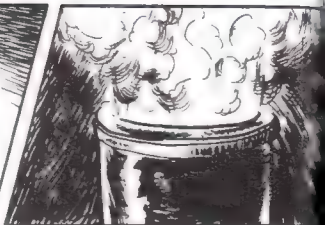


I FIGURED A
NINJA WOULD
ESCAPE OVER
KOKUZŌ.







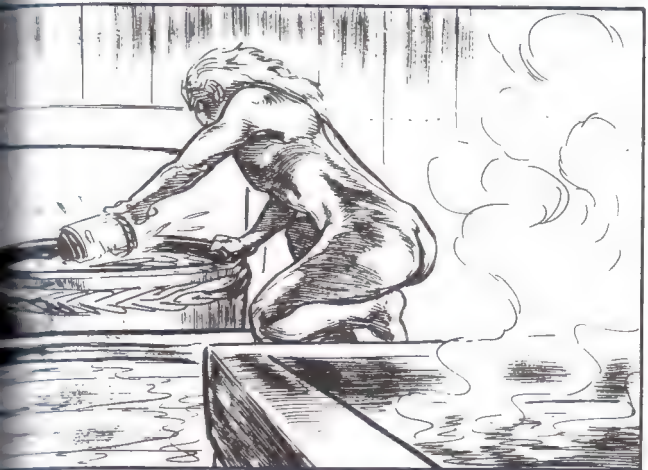
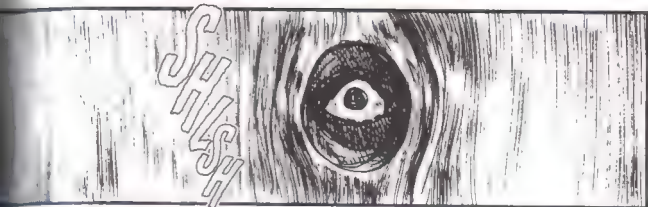


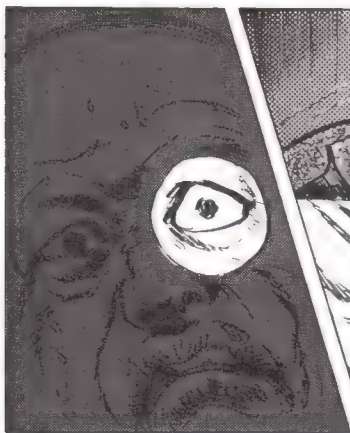


*the hundred and
twenty-ninth*

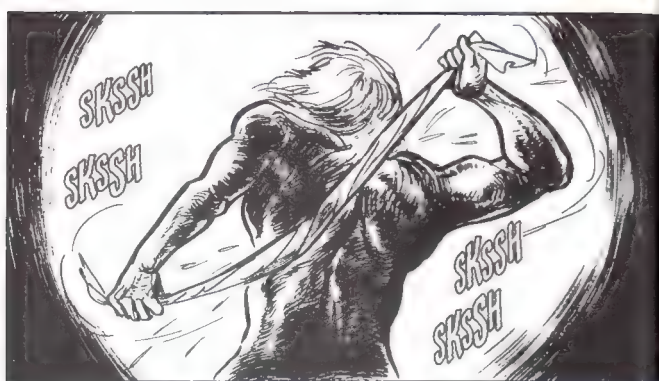
Struggle in the Dark

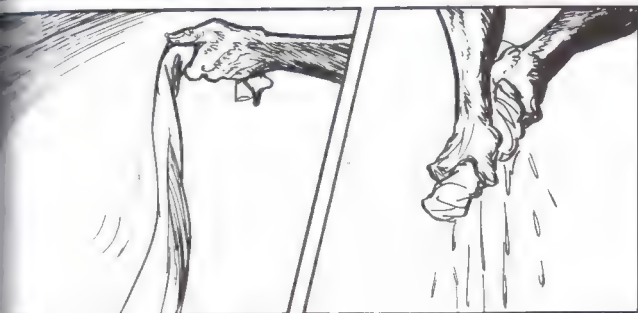








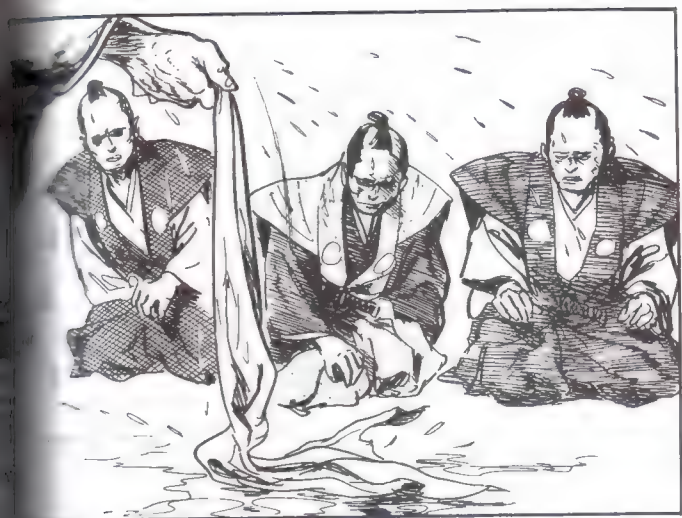


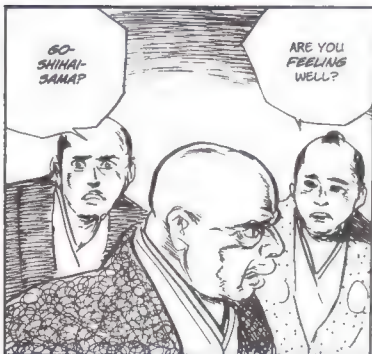












WHAT CAN'T
HE/ THERE
HAS TO BE
SOMETHING!

IT'S THERE,
DAMN IT! OTHERWISE
HE'D BE SKIN AND
BONES BY NOW...

HE'D HAVE...
CROAKED.

INSTEAD, HE'S...
PURIFYING.

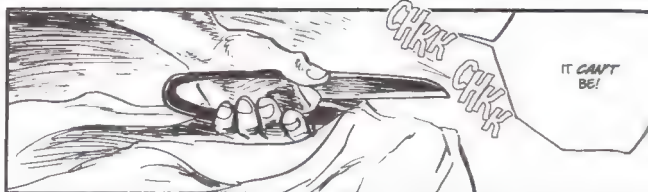
STILL
NOT

NOT
CRAWLING...

MUSCLES
RIPPLING.
EYES
BURNING...

HOW THE
DEVIL...

HOW THE
DEVIL...?!



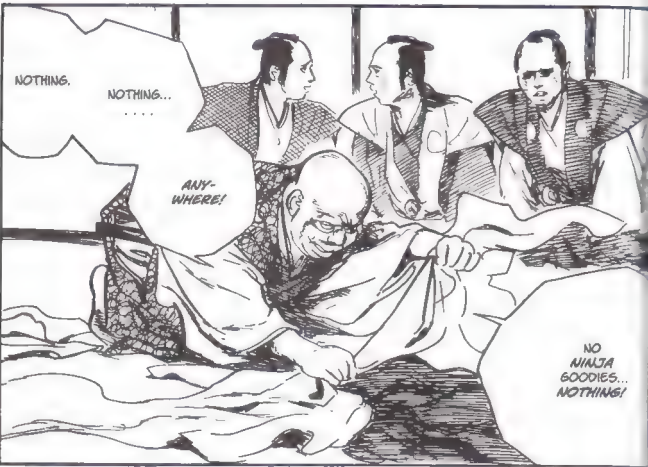
IT CAN'T
BE!



IT'S
HERE!

HERE SOME-
WHERE...!

CAN'T
BE. HAS
TO BE!

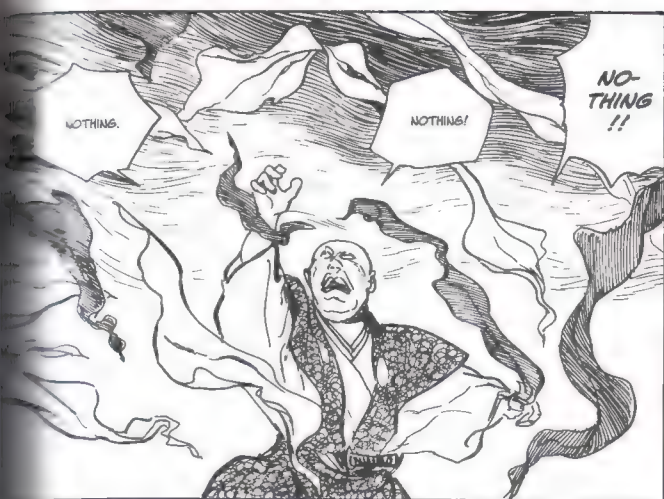


NOTHING.

NOTHING...

ANY-
WHERE!

NO
NINJA
GOODIES...
NOTHING!



WE'RE BACK
TO SQUARE ONE.
ALL OVER
AGAIN!

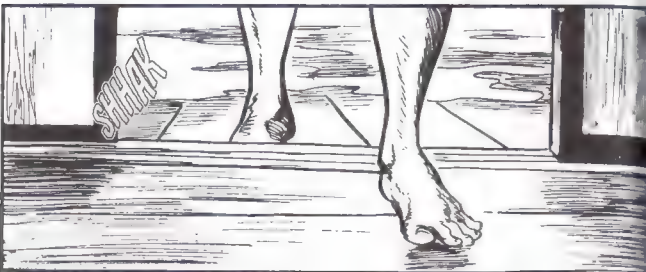
NO DRINK, NO FOOD,
NO SLEEP, NO PEE. SO
WHY'S HE SO DAMNED
HEALTHY?!

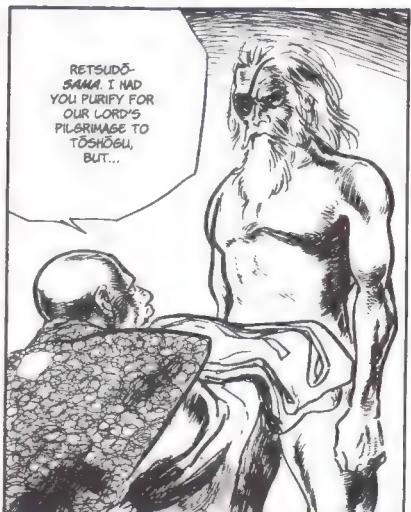
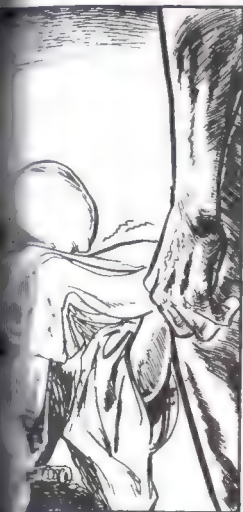
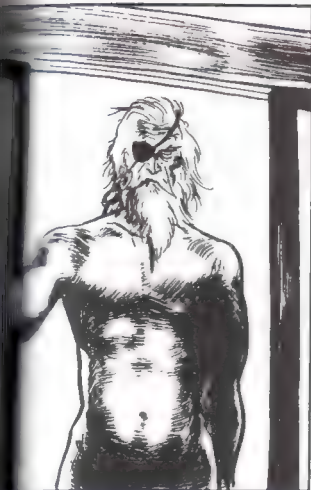


RETSUDŌ-
SAMA HAS
FINISHED HIS
BATH!



SHUAX



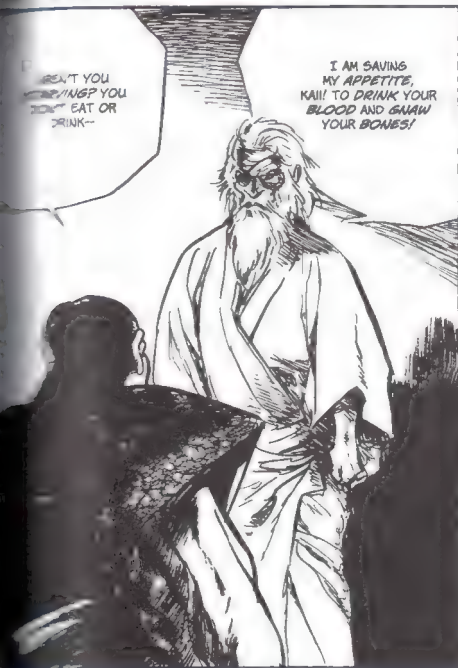
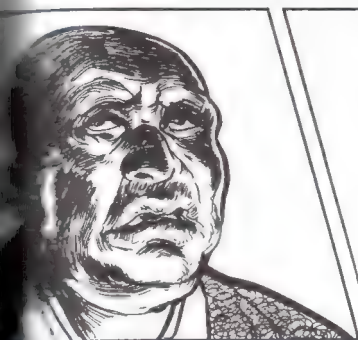


...I ALSO
PREPARED NEW
CLOTHES.

THEY
HAVE NO
CREST,
BUT...

...PLEASE
WEAR THEM.

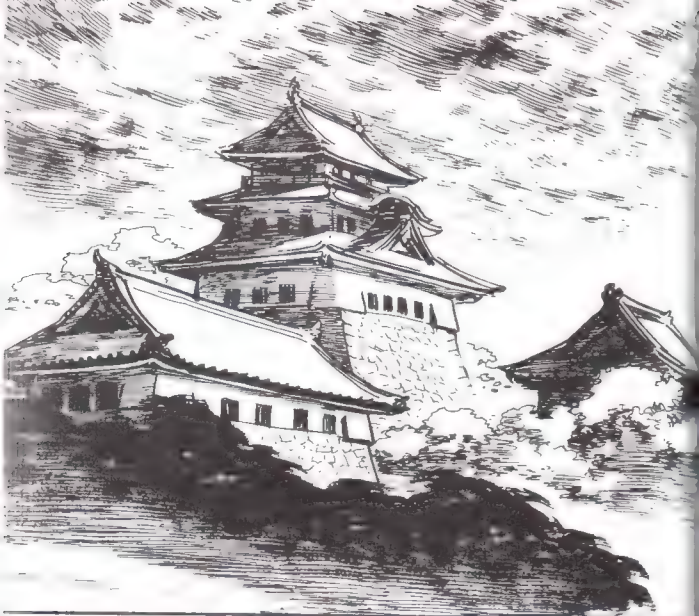
I...I HAVE
ONE QUESTION,
SIR.



AREN'T YOU
BRINGING YOU
TO EAT OR
DRINK--

I AM SAVING
MY APPETITE,
KAI!! TO DRINK YOUR
BLOOD AND GNAW
YOUR BONES!







MY
LORD!



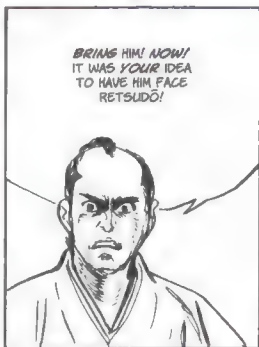
YOU SAID YOU
KNEW WHERE **OGAMI**
IS, BUT YOU'VE
DONE NOTHING!
WHY NOT?!

THE **MACHI**
BUGYŌ SAYS
ITTŌ IS LIVING
ON THE **HATCHŌ**
STRAND!



MY LORD,
I...

HE'S
EVEN BUILT
A HUT, BY
GOD!



BRING HIM! NOW!
IT WAS YOUR IDEA
TO HAVE HIM FACE
RETSUDŌ!

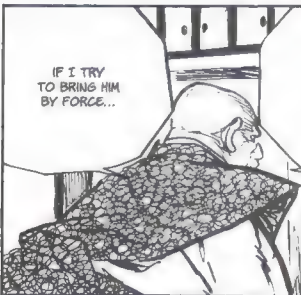
FORGIVE
ME...



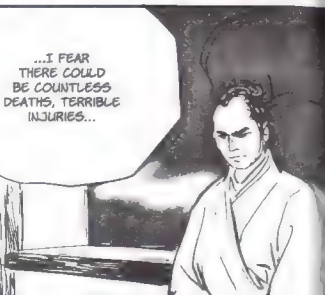
AS MY LORD KNOWS
WELL, OGAMI ITTÔ IS A
SUICHO-RYU MASTER, AS
STRONG AS YAGYU-
SAMA.



IF I TRY
TO BRING HIM
BY FORCE...



...I FEAR
THERE COULD
BE COUNTLESS
DEATHS, TERRIBLE
INJURIES...

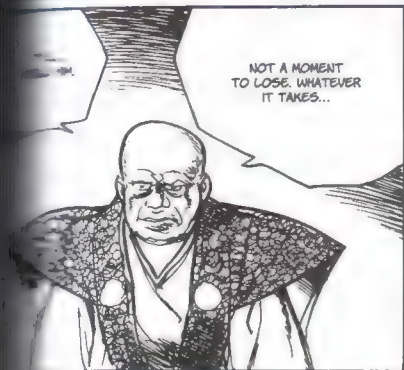
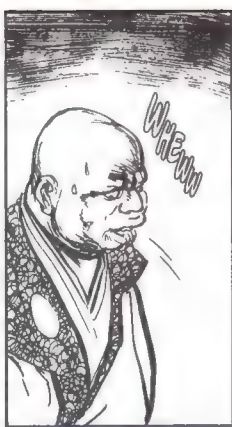
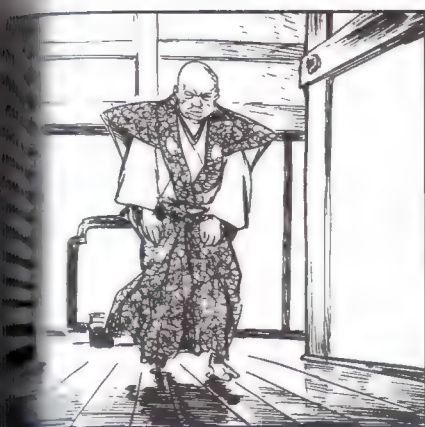


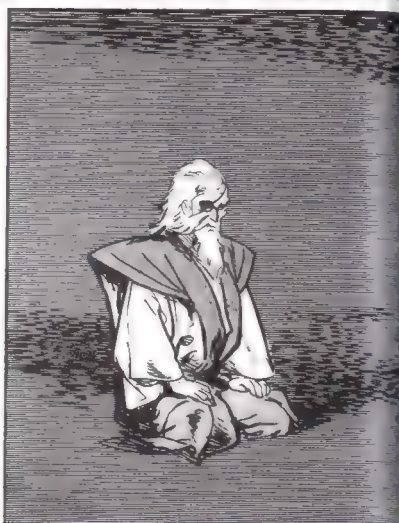
HE'S A WANTED ASSASSIN, FEARED
THROUGHOUT THE LAND, MY LORD. HE'D RESIST TO
THE DEATH, AS HE HAS ALWAYS DONE. INSTEAD...
I'VE DEVISED A WAY TO GET HIM HERE WITHOUT
BLOODSHED, AND AM JUST ABOUT TO
IMPLEMENT IT.



PLEASE, MY LORD.
JUST A LITTLE
LONGER...

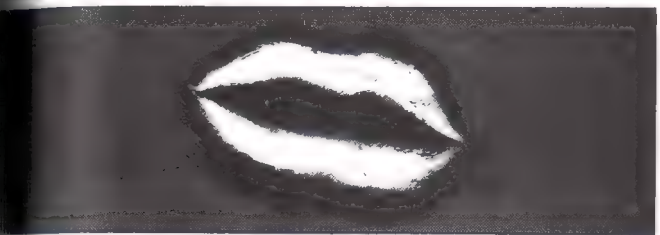
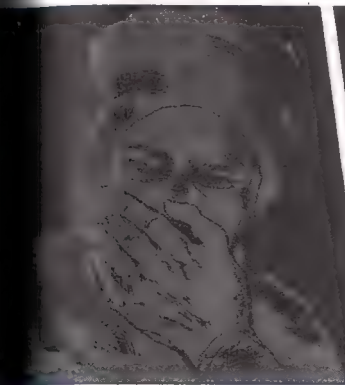
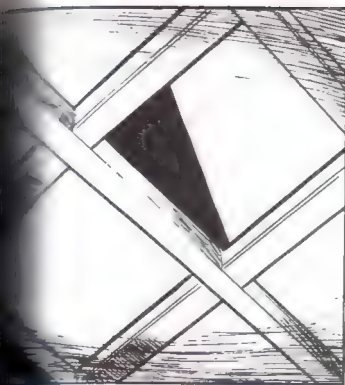


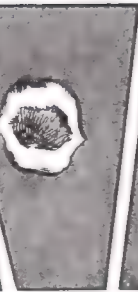




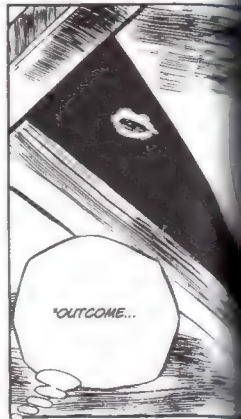








*ABE...
QUESTIONED...
IN SHOGUN'S
CHAMBER...

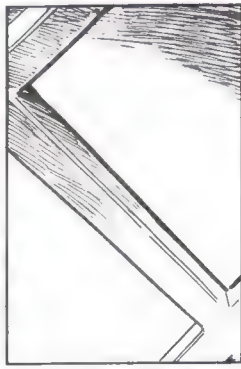
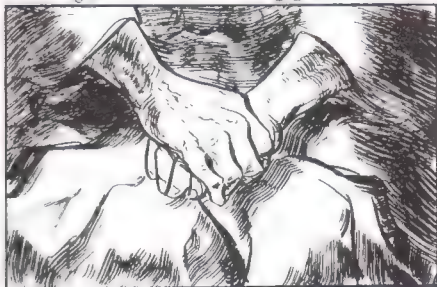


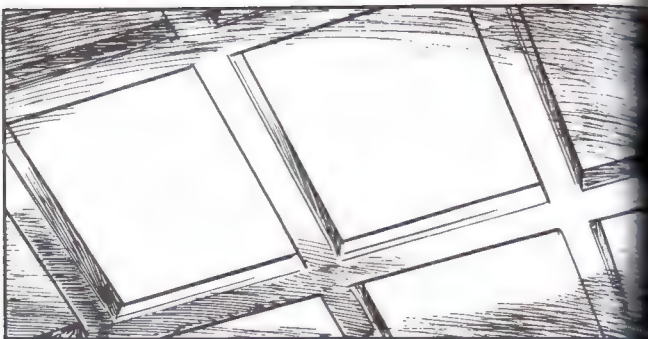
"OUTCOME..."



"HE
RESOLVES
TO MURDER
RETSUDO-
SAMA..."

"WITH
POISON
TONIGHT"



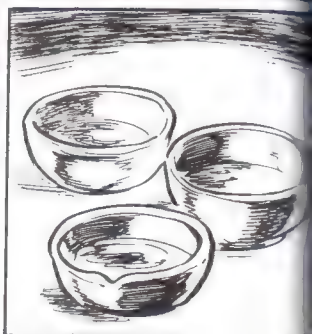


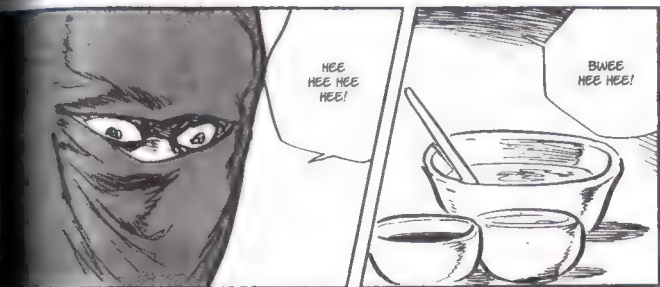
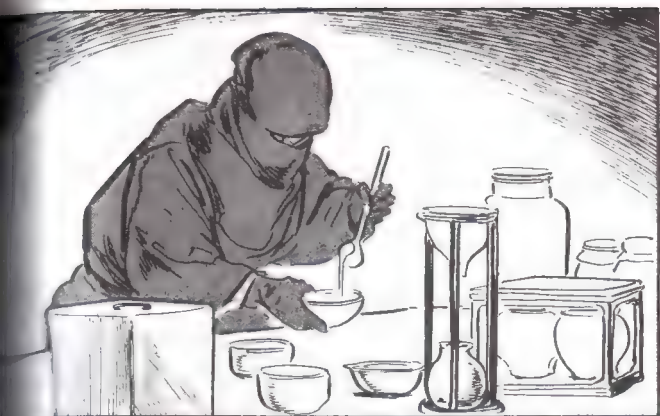
AT LAST,
EH? YOUR
MOST SUBTLE
POISON.

INSO...
FOO...



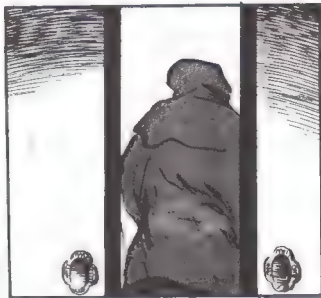
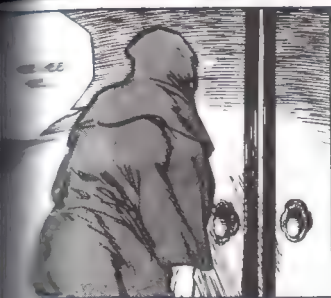


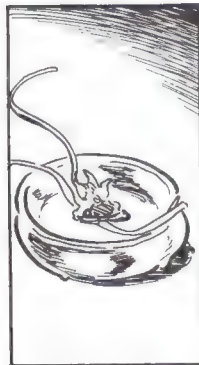
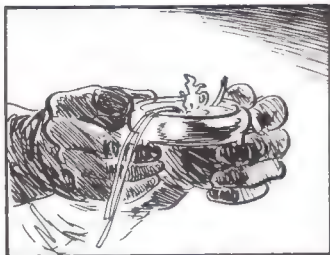
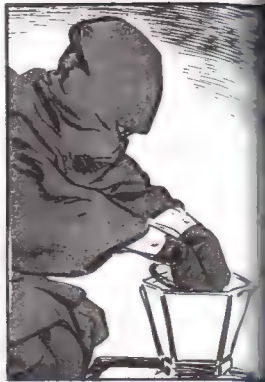


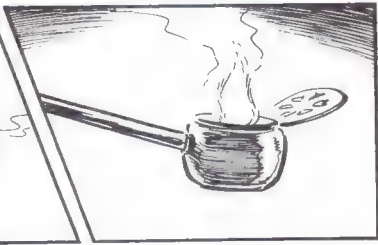


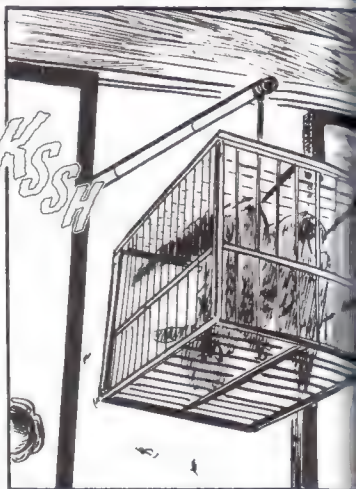
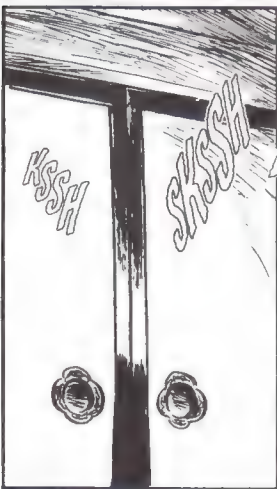
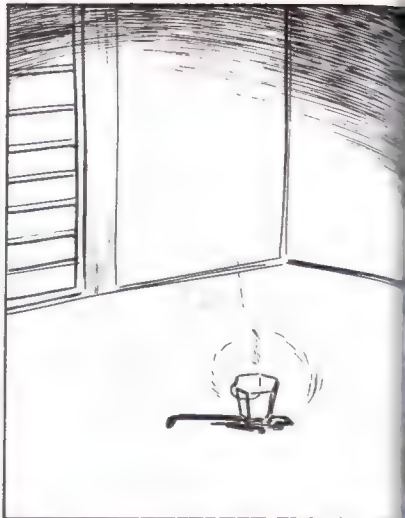
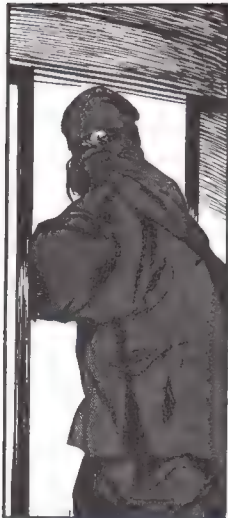
HEE
HEE HEE
HEE!

BWEE
HEE HEE!







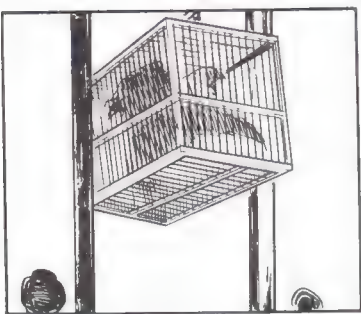




SK
SH

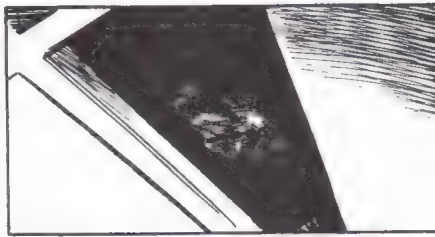
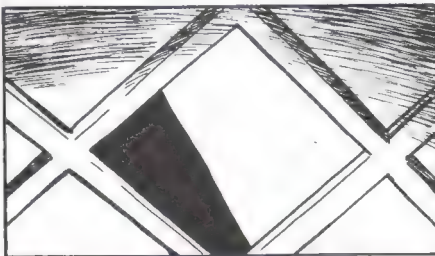
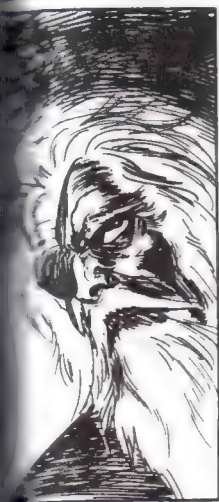


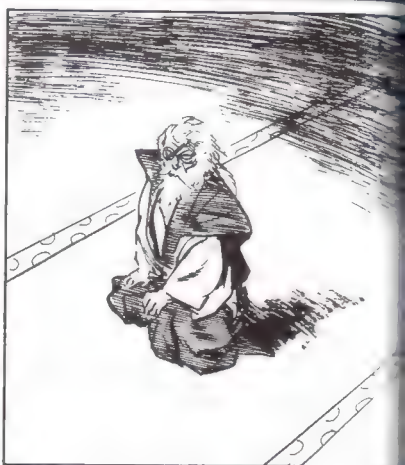
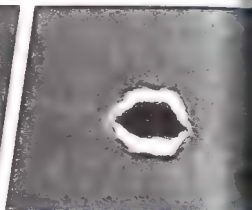
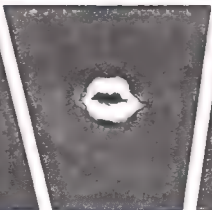
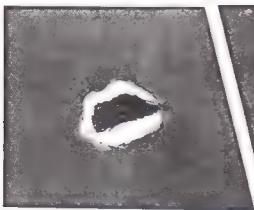


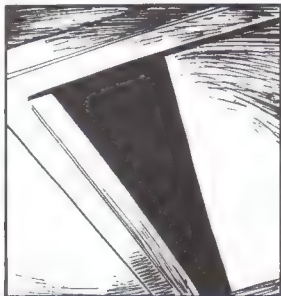
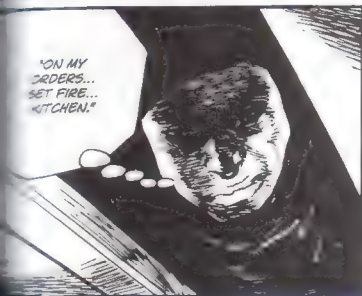
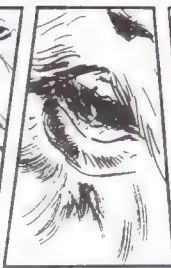


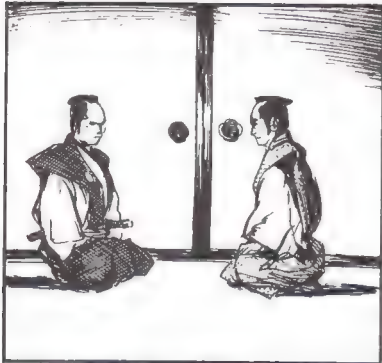
KILL HIM IN
ONE BREATH, THEN
MAKE IT LOOK LIKE
HE CUT HIS OWN
STOMACH.

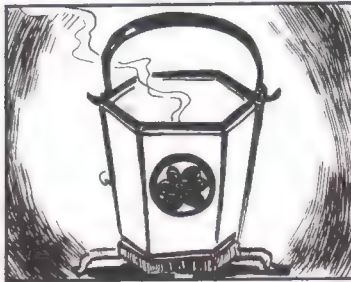
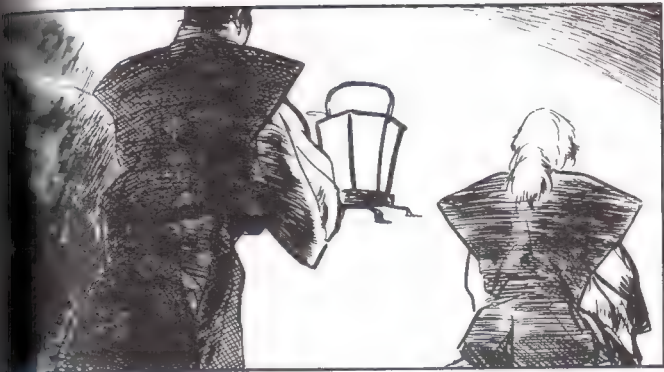
THAT'S
HOW YOU KILL
A MONSTER

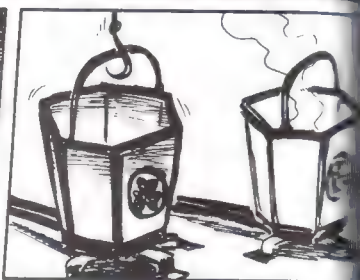
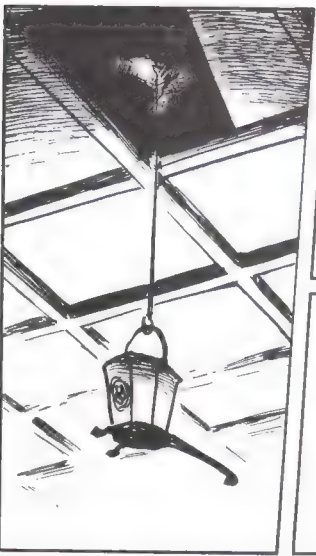
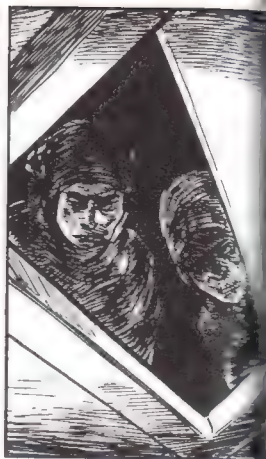


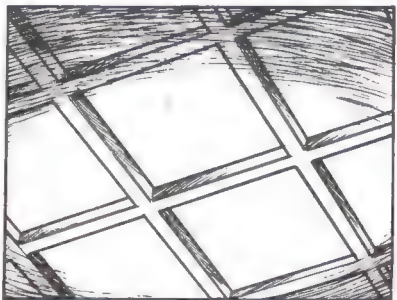
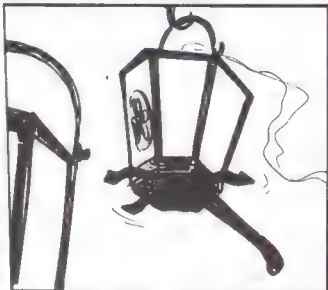




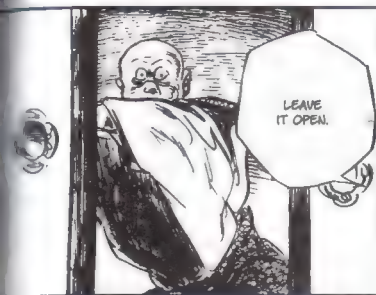


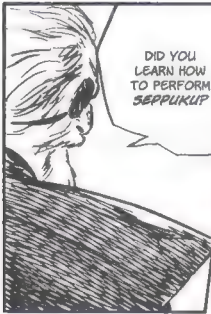








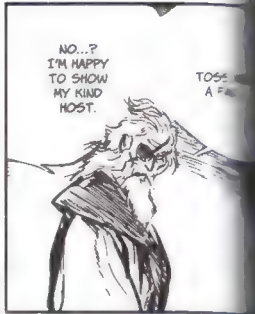




DID YOU
LEARN HOW
TO PERFORM
SEPPUKU?

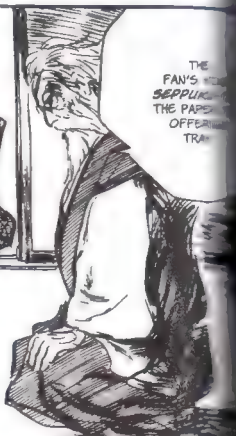
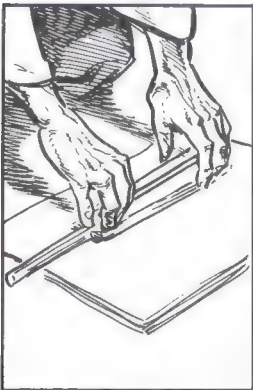
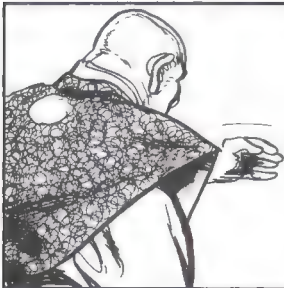


...?!

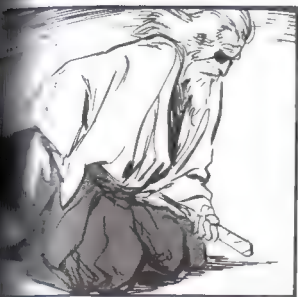
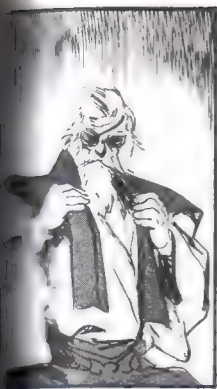


NO...?
I'M HAPPY
TO SHOW
MY KIND
HOST.

TOSHI
A FAN



THE
FAN'S
SEPPUKU
THE PAPER
OFFER
TRAIN

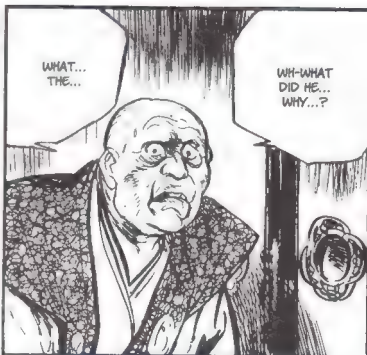


LEAN
FORWARD,
AND PLACE THE
TRAY UNDER
YOUR HIPS.

AFTER
A SKILLFUL
BEHEADING, YOUR
HEAD WILL DANGLE
BY A STRIP OF
SKIN.







FIRE! FIRE!
FIRE IN THE
KITCHEN!!

NO!!

THD THD THD

NOOOO!!

PUT IT
OUT!

QUICKLY!!

PUT IT
OUT!!







PHEWW...
NOTHING
SERIOUS.



AHH!!

OUR
LORD VIS-
TOSHÔ
SHRINE



HE'S ALREADY
BACK, BUT TODAY...
ALL DAY...TO HAVE
A FIRE MEANS...

...PUNISHMENT
THE ABSOLUTE
PUNISHMENT

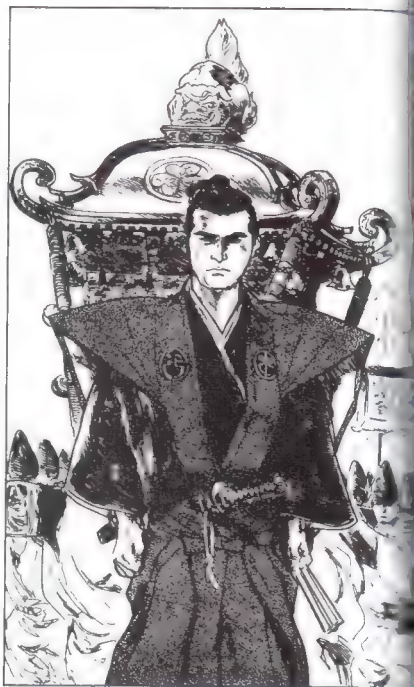


S...SEPPUKU!!
AUHH!

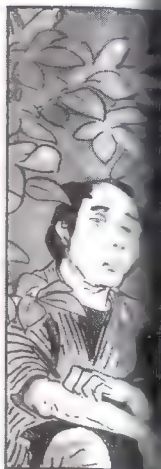
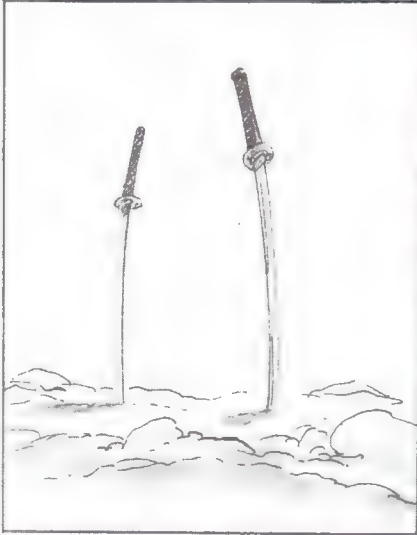


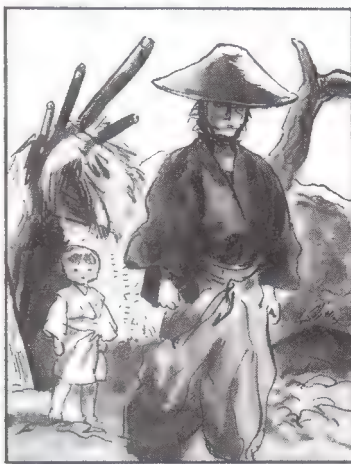
*the hundred and
thirtieth*

Song of the Spirit











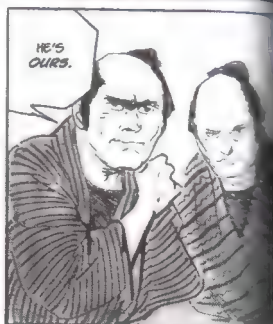
LOOKS
LIKE HE'S
HEADING
OUT



YOU
TWO TAIL
HIM.

AND
DON'T
LOSE
HIM!

RIGHT,
BOSS.



HE'S
OURS.



WHEN I
GO TO FIGHT,
YOU'LL BE
WITH ME.

UNDERSTAND?

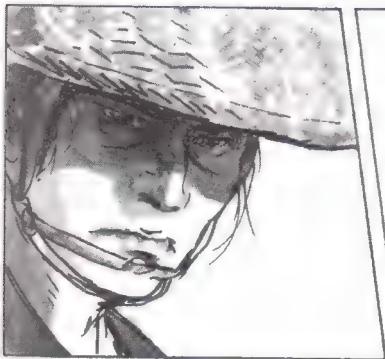


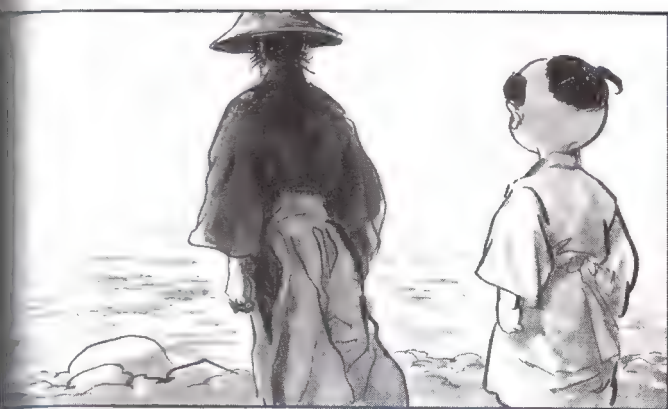
BUT FOR
NOW, I LEAVE
MY SPIRIT...

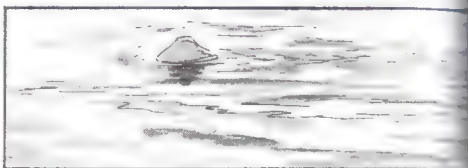
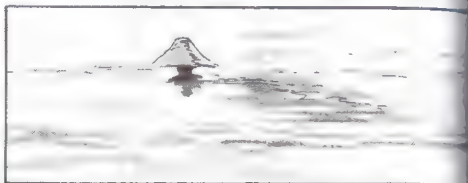
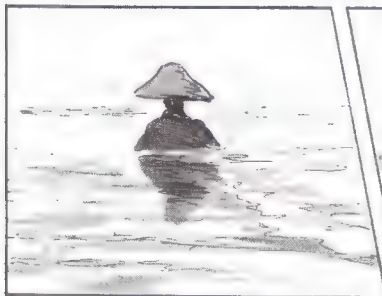


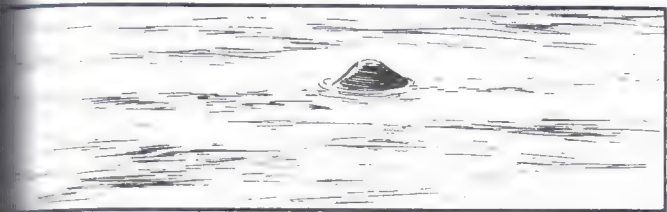
...IN
YOUR HANDS,
DAIGORO.

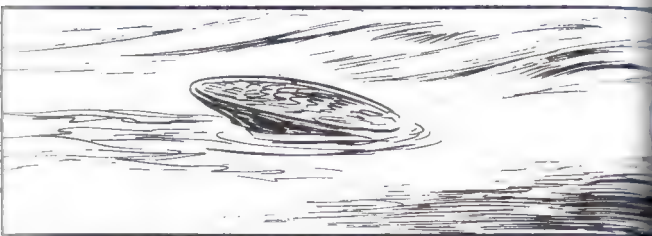
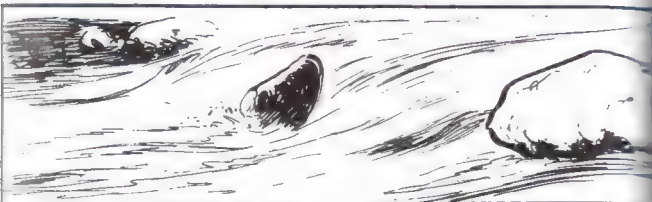
ARE YOU
READY?













THE SANNO SHRINE
FESTIVAL, BY OTHER
NAME, THE TENKA
MATSURI. THIS
ELABORATE EVENT
CLIMAXED ON THE
FIFTEENTH OF
THE MONTH.

THE MACHI-BUGYŌ
CONVEYED THE WILL
OF THE RYŪŌ TO
THE THREE MACHI-
DOSHIYORI



THE MACHI-DOSHIYORI RAN
EDO'S LOCAL GOVERNMENT.
IF THE MACHI-BUGYŌ WAS
MODERN TOKYO'S GOVERNOR,
THEN THESE THREE MEN
WERE HIS WARD CHIEFS.

DESCENDED FROM COMMONERS
WHO FOLLOWED THE REVERED
FIRST SHŌGUN TOKUGAWA
IEYASU FROM MIKAWA TO EDO
THEY ENJOYED THE HEREDITARY
RIGHT TO USE A FAMILY NAME
BEAR SWORDS, AND WEAR THE
NOSHIME ROBES OF THE
SAMURAI.



A black and white illustration of a man with dark hair and a serious expression, wearing a dark, open robe over a light-colored garment. He is walking from left to right. In the background, on the left, is a large, round drum mounted on a wooden stand. To the right, a long, thin structure, possibly a festival float or a bridge railing, extends into the distance with several vertical elements hanging from it.

THE SHŌGUN FAMILY WAS
PART OF THE SANNO SHRINE'S
FLOCK. AND THUS, THIS FESTIVAL
PROCESSION ALONE WAS
ALLOWED INTO EDO
CASTLE.

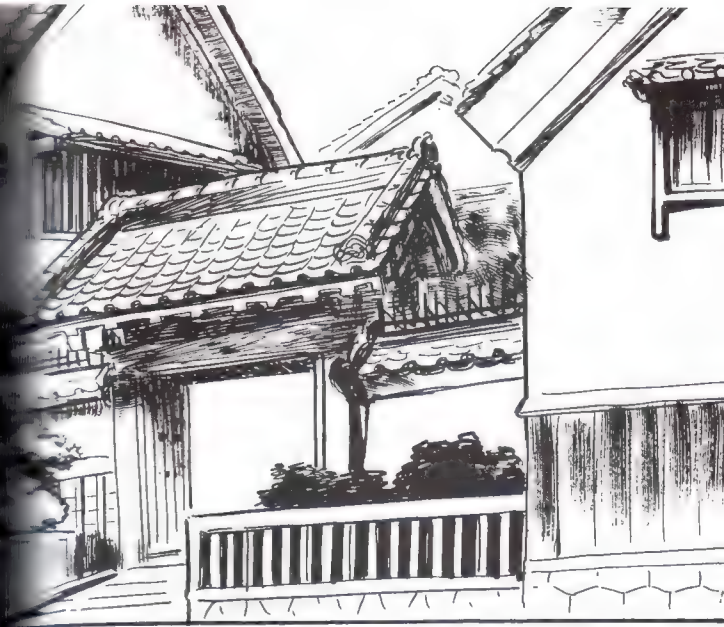
A black and white illustration of the same man from the first panel, shown from the chest up. He has a very stern, almost angry expression. He is wearing the same dark robe. Behind him, a large, ornate festival float (dashi) is visible, featuring a large, rounded, shell-like structure on top and a key-like ornament hanging from the side.

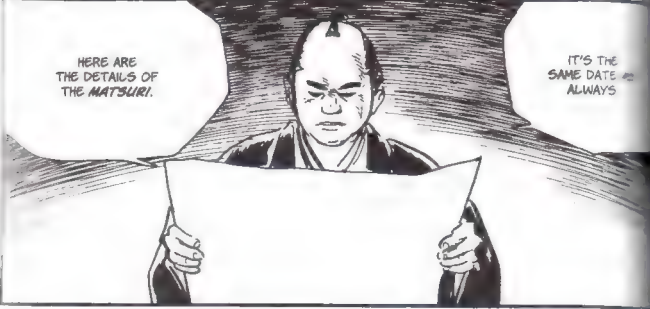
SEEKING
TO ENTER
THE CASTLE
WITH IT...

...ŌGAMI ITTŌ
STRODE TOWARD
THE HOME OF
TARUYA TŌEMON.

A black and white illustration showing a close-up of the man's face. He has a very intense, stern expression with furrowed brows. The background is dark and indistinct, with some shapes that could be festival floats or structures.

...THE MACHI-
DOSHİYORI
RUNNING EDO'S
GREATEST
FESTIVAL.



A man with a shaved head and a small topknot, wearing a dark kimono, holds a large, blank sheet of paper in front of him. He has a serious expression. The background is dark and textured.

HERE ARE
THE DETAILS OF
THE MATSURI.

IT'S THE
SAME DATE
ALWAYS

A group of men in traditional Japanese clothing are gathered in a room with sliding doors. In the foreground, a man is seen from behind, looking at a map or document on a table. Other men stand behind him, some looking at the document. The scene is dimly lit.

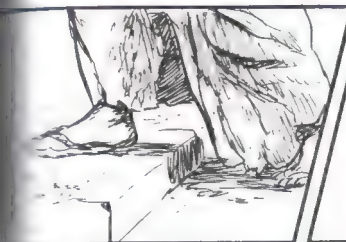
WE ENTER
YAMASHITA
GATE AT DAWN,
TRANSIT SAKURADA
AND CLIMB THE
KURODA ESTATE
INCLINE.

AT THE
SANNŌ SHRINE
WE TURN DOWN
INTO NAGATA-CHŌ
ENTERING THE
INNER GROUND
AT HANZŌ
GATE

A group of men in traditional Japanese clothing are gathered in a room. In the foreground, a man is seen from behind, looking at a map or document on a table. Other men stand behind him, some looking at the document. The scene is dimly lit.

TAKE
TAKEBASHI
GATE TO
ŌTEMAE...

...AND LEAVE
THE CASTLE PER
USUAL VIA JŌBAN
BRIDGE.





HOLD IT!
WHERE YA GOIN',
GO-RONIN?

I WISH TO
SEE TARUYA
TÔEMON-
DONO.



THE BOSS DON'T
GOT TIME FOR EVERY
SCARECROW RÔNIN
IN TOWN.

DON'T KNOW
WHAT YER AFTER
BUT SCRAM



OH,
I KNOW
WHAT THESE
BEGGARS
WANT.

THE FESTIVAL'S
COMIN', THEY WANNA
SCORE A QUICK
BUCK. HELL, WHO
WOULDN'T?



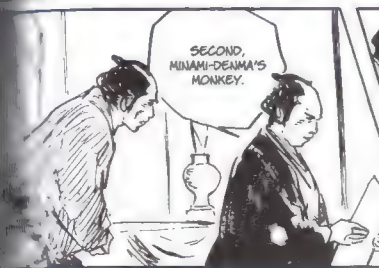
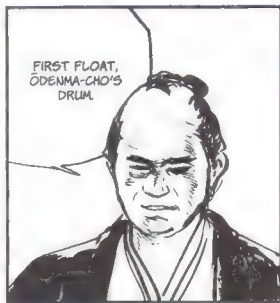
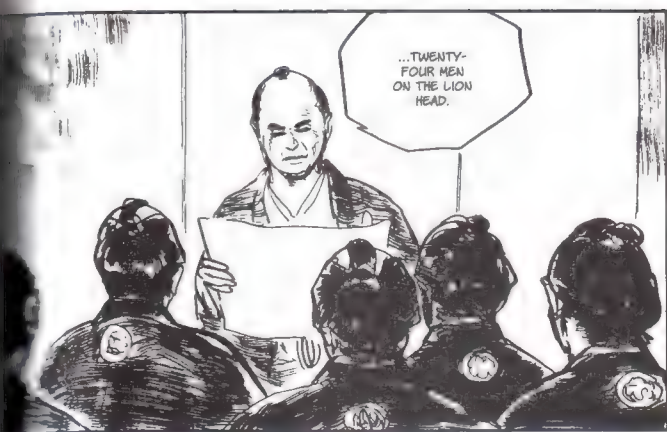
K-KAISHAKUNIN...?
DON'T THAT MEAN...

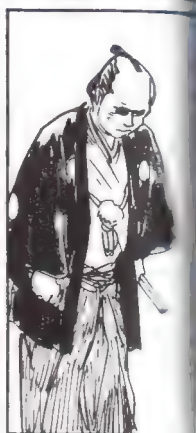
L-LOVE
WOLF AND
CUB...!

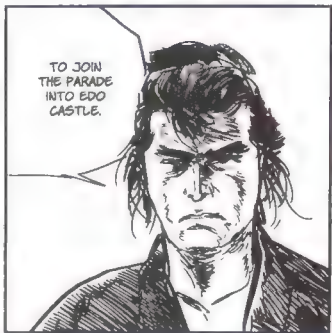
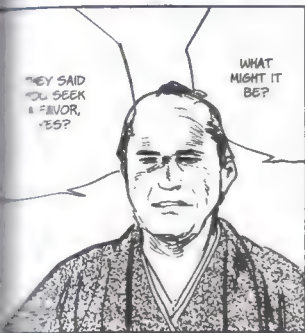
EDO HAD
CHANGED.

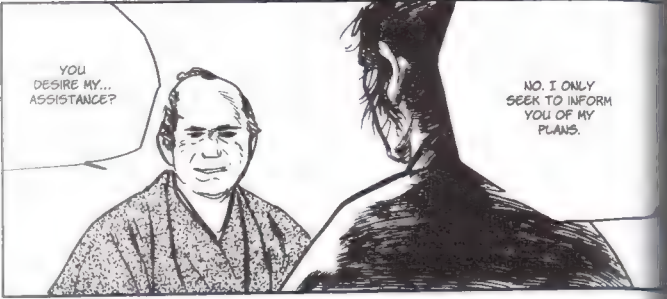
NOW THE
NAME STREETS
TERROR.

AND AS ITTŌ AGAIN TROD THE
SOIL OF THE CAPITAL, PUSHING
DEEP INTO ENEMY TERRITORY,
THE WHEELS OF KARMA ONCE
MORE BEGAN TO TURN...









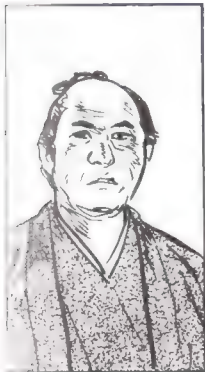
YOU
DESIRE MY...
ASSISTANCE?

NO. I ONLY
SEEK TO INFORM
YOU OF MY
PLANS.



I'LL CAUSE
NO DISRUPTION,
NOR HAVE I EVIL
INTENT.

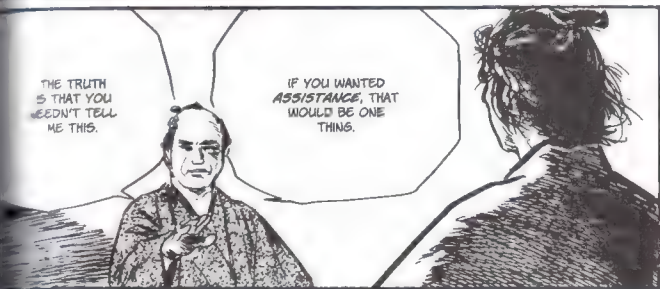
BUT I NEED
THE FESTIVAL
FOR COVER. I
SEEK YOUR
PERMISSION.



I ASSURE
YOU THAT I
SHALL BE NO
TROUBLE...



SIR...RAISE
YOUR HEAD
PLEASE!



THE TRUTH
IS THAT YOU
WOULDN'T TELL
ME THIS.

IF YOU WANTED
ASSISTANCE, THAT
WOULD BE ONE
THING.



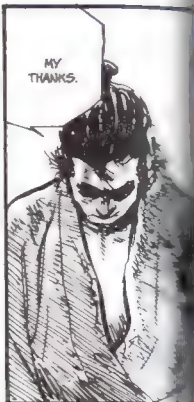
BUT THIS
REQUEST...
A FAVOR?
REALLY,
SIR.

I'M USING
IT FOR MY
OWN ENDS.
IT'S RIGHT
TO ASK.



DO YOU
ALLOW
IT?

THE MATSURI
BELONGS TO
ALL EDO. LET
HEAVEN JUDGE
AS IT WILL.



MY
THANKS.

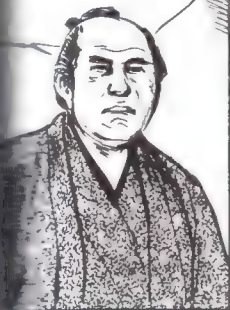


PLEASE
EXCUSE
ME...



WA~
PLEASE

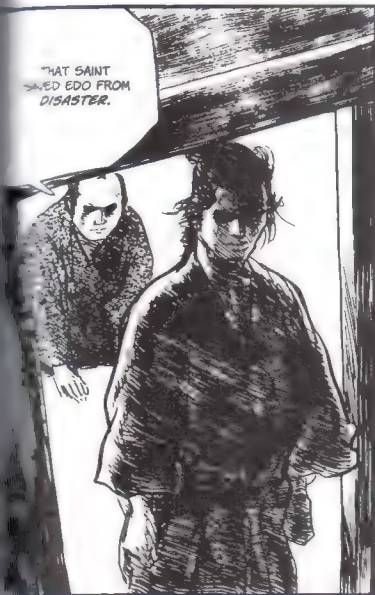
I WOULD
ASK YOU A
FAVOR, SIR



DURING
THE GREAT
FLOOD, SOMEONE
BLEW UP SUMIYOSHI
HILL TO BLOCK
THE SHINKAWA
RIVER.



THAT SAINT
SAVED EDO FROM
DISASTER.



AS MACHI-
DOSHIVORI,
I THANK
HIM.

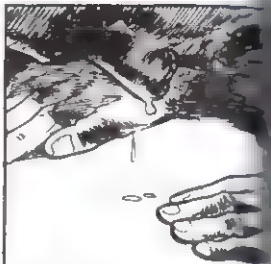


SHOULD
HE ASK FOR MY
HELP NOW COULD
I POSSIBLY
REFUSE?

HE SAVED
THOUSANDS OF
LIVES I'D DO
ANYTHING

I CANNOT
HELP YOU

MY
APOLOGIES



WHAT
NUMBER OF
MAN?

TO ME,
WHO PULLED
NAGASAKIYA FROM
THE FLOOD? WHO
HEARD EVERY-
THING...

OFFER
HE'LL
REFUSE

AND
THEN TO COME
AND APOLOGIZE...
IN CASE HIS
PRESENCE CAUSES
TROUBLE...

JUST FOR
THAT...KNOWING
I COULD BETRAY
HIS SECRET.

IF THERE
WERE ANY LIKE HIM
AMONG THE O-BUKE,
WE COULD HALT THE
MATSURI...

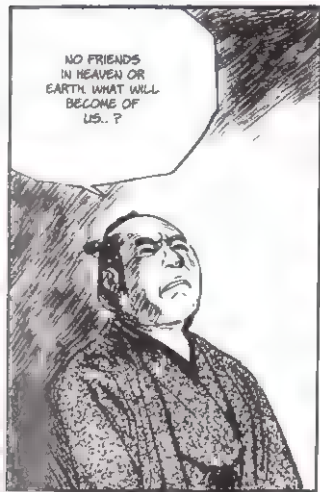
RECESSION,
INFLATION AND
NOW THIS! IT'LL
COST US A
FORTUNE...

BUT THE RYŪBI
JUST SAYS MAKE
IT BIGGER, EVEN
FANCIER THAN
LAST YEAR...



NO FRIENDS
IN HEAVEN OR
EARTH. WHAT WILL
BECOME OF
US.. ?

WHEN THEY
SPEAK OF TRUE
BUSHI, THEY
MEAN YOU,
SIR.



OGAMI-SAMA,
WHATEVER YOUR
GOAL.



...IN THE
NAME OF ALL
EDO...

I THANK
YOU FROM OUR
HEARTS.



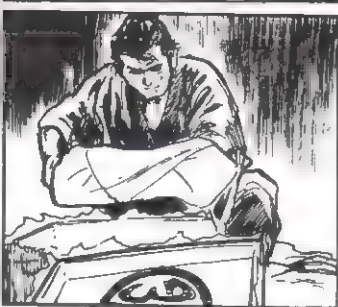
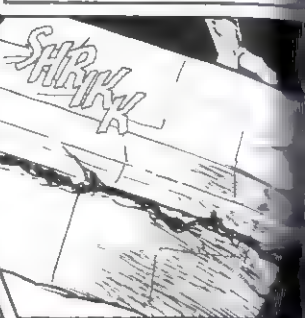
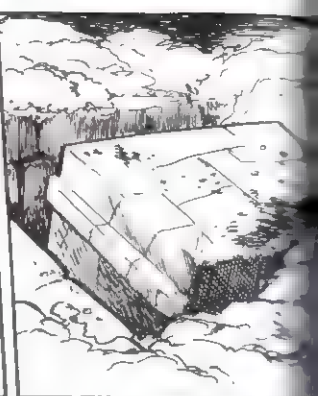
STILL,
EVEN DURING
THE CONFUSION
OF THE
FESTIVAL.

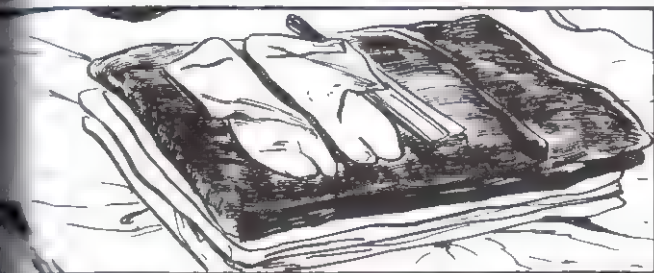
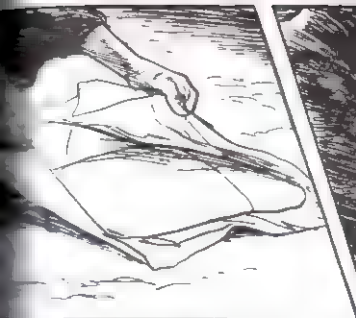


.. HOW CAN
HE GET IN
THERE ALONE,
UNASSISTED?



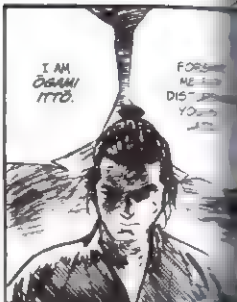






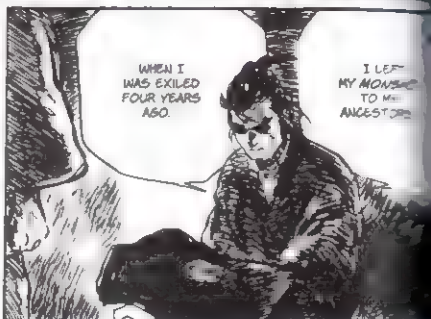
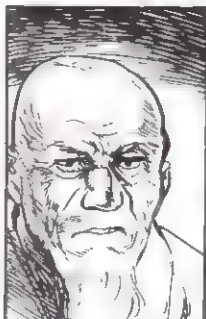


WHAT'S
ALL THIS,
HMP?



I AM
OGAMI
ITTO.

FORGIVE
ME AND
DISTURB
YOUR
LIFE.



WHEN I
WAS EXILED
FOUR YEARS
AGO.

I LET
MY MONSTER
TO MY
ANCESTORS.



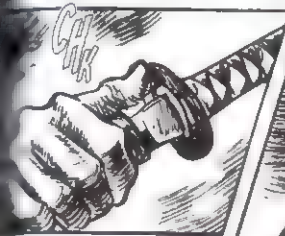
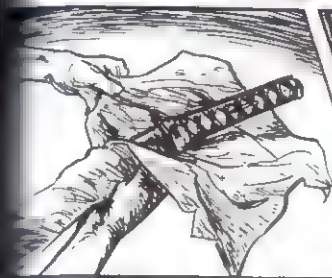
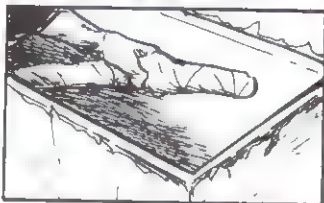
NOW
I HAVE
RESOLVED
TO WEAR IT
AGAIN.

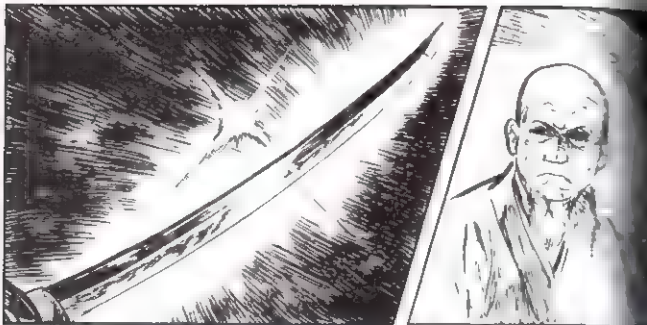
PERHAPS I
SHOULD HAVE ASKED
FIRST BUT I FEARED
I'D BRING YOU
TROUBLE.

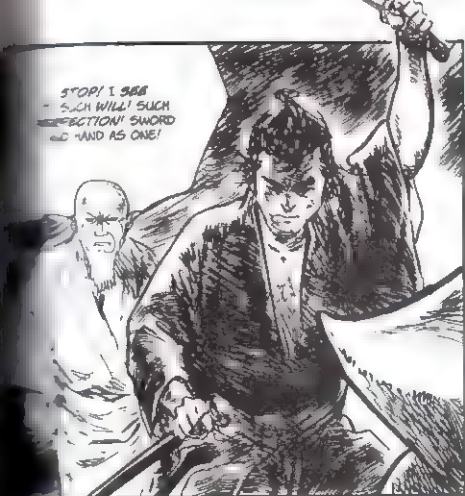
YOUR
PREDECESSOR
GRACIOUSLY ALLOWED
ME TO RECLAIM THEM AT
WILL. BUT HE PASSED
AWAY LAST YEAR DO
YOU ASSENT ?

WHAT'S
YOURS IS
YOURS

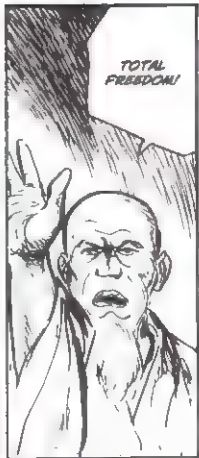
BUT
FIRST, SOME
PROOF







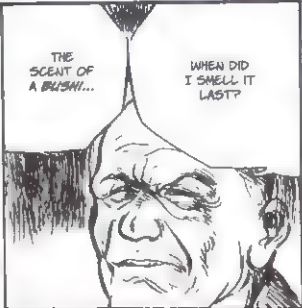
STOP! I SEE
- SUCH WILL! SUCH
- SECTION! SWORD
- AND AS ONE!



TOTAL
FREEDOM!



REMARKABLE
FOUR YEARS IN
THE EARTH, AND NO
RUST PRESERVED
WITH A WARRIOR'S
HEART



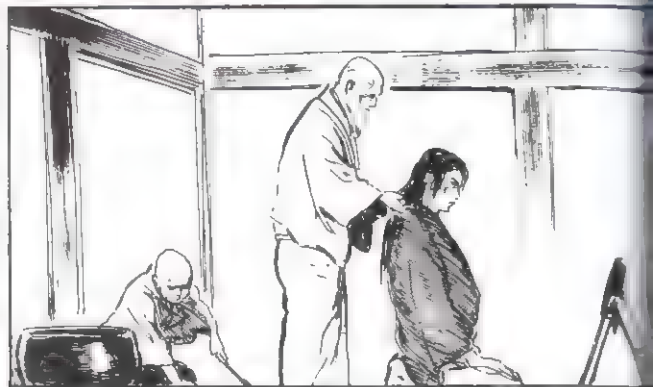
THE
SCENT OF
A BUSHI...

WHEN DID
I SMELL IT
LAST?

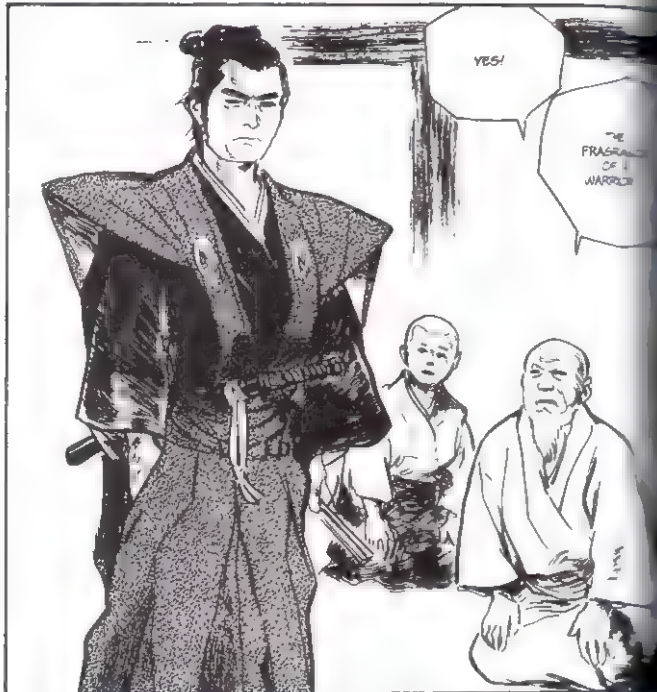


COME.

ONE WEARS THE
MONSHO FOR DEATH
AND BATTLE YOU MUST
GO PREPARED.







YES!

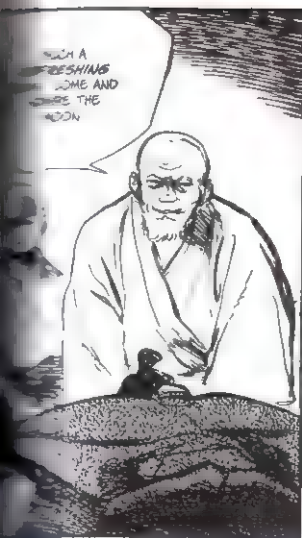
THE
FRAGRANCE
OF A
WARRIOR

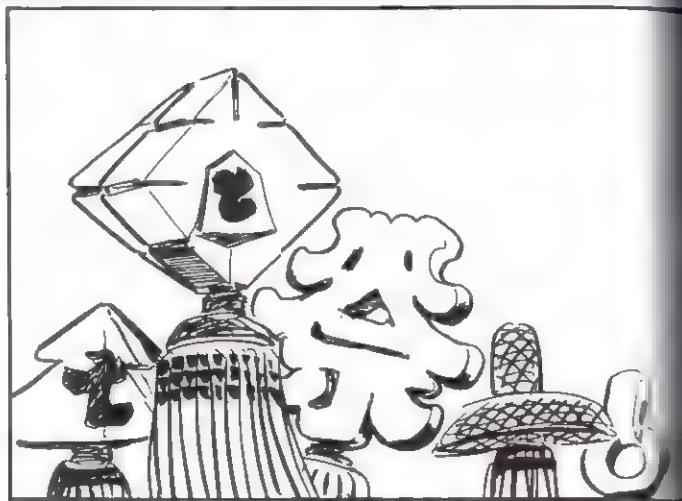
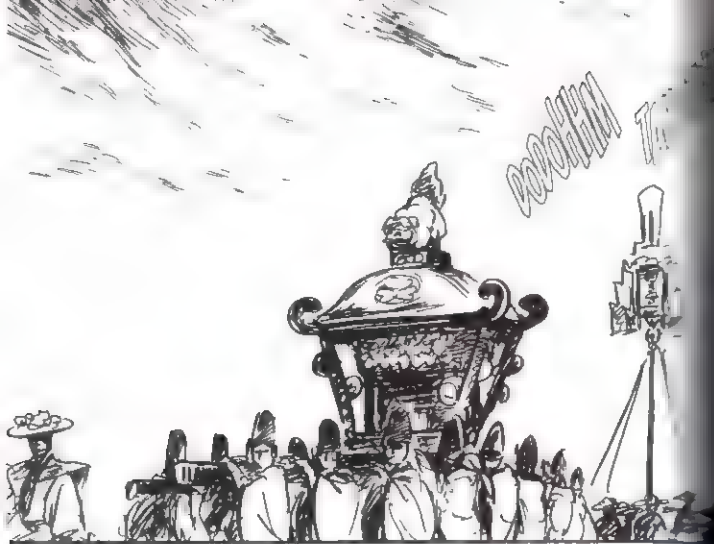


MY
THANKS.

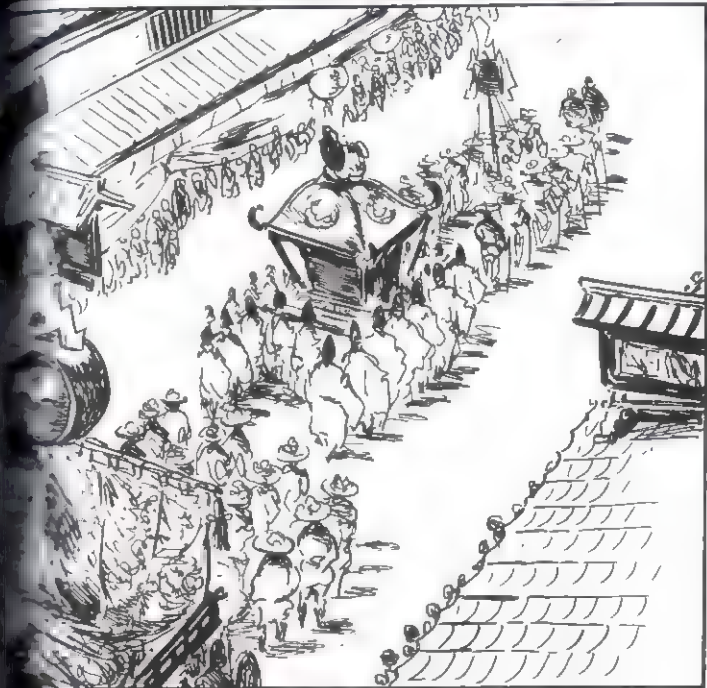
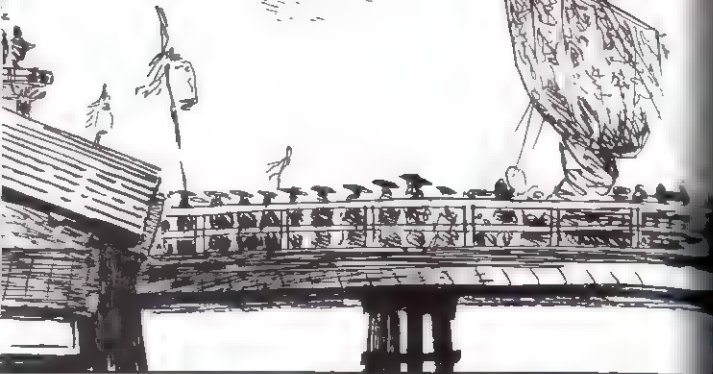
WE'LL NOT MEET
AGAIN IN THIS LIFE, BUT
I'LL REMEMBER THIS
FOR SEVEN LIVES
TO COME.

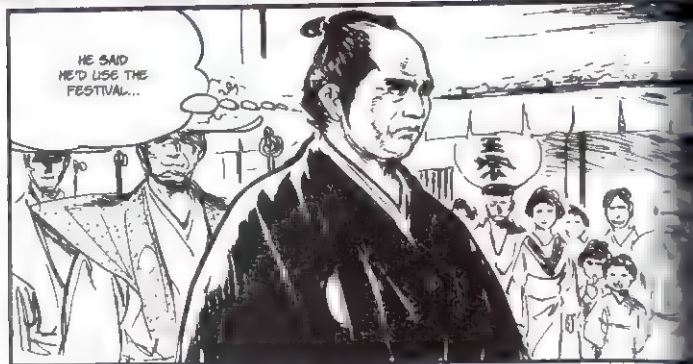
THE
FRAGRANCE
OF A
WARRIOR

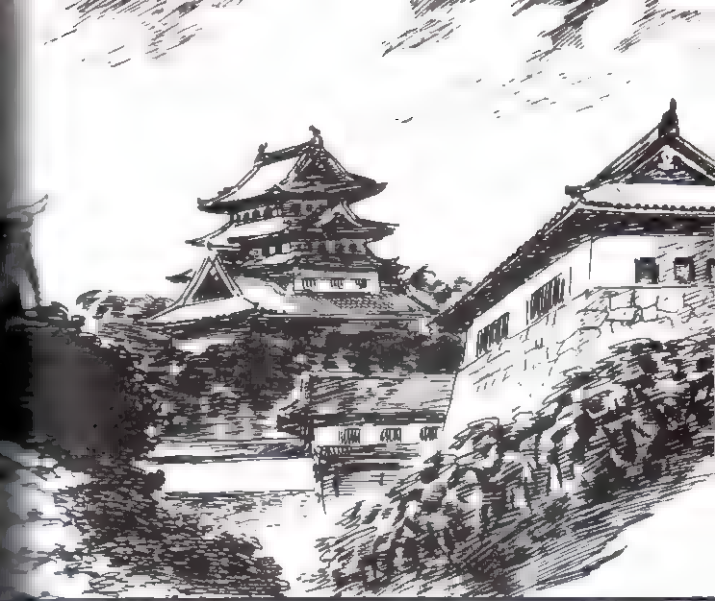


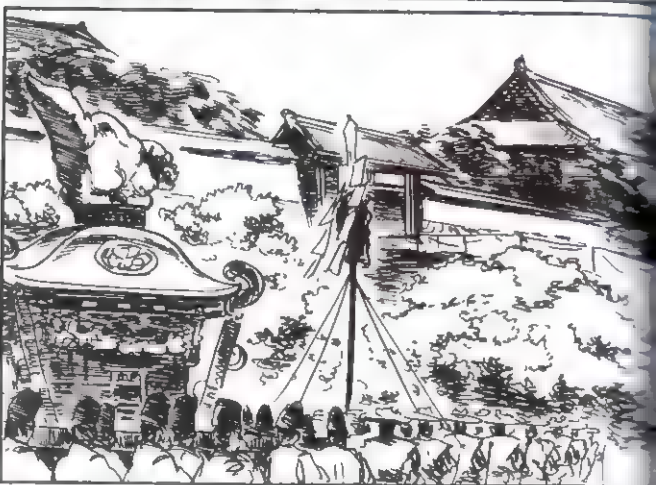


THE PAPIER MÂCHÉ LION WAS
MADE OF PAPER PASSED DOWN
FROM THE THIRD SHOGUN,
TOKUGAWA IEMITSU. THIS BEGAN
THE TENKA MATSURI...

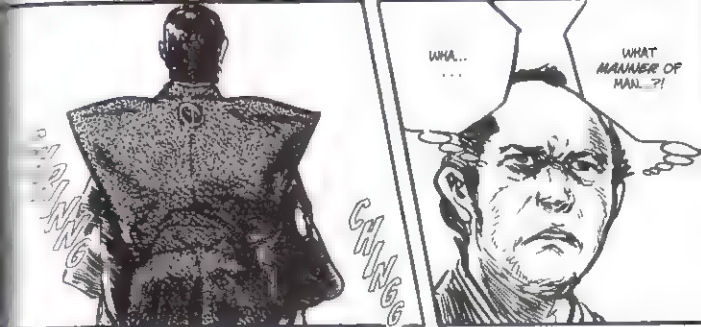


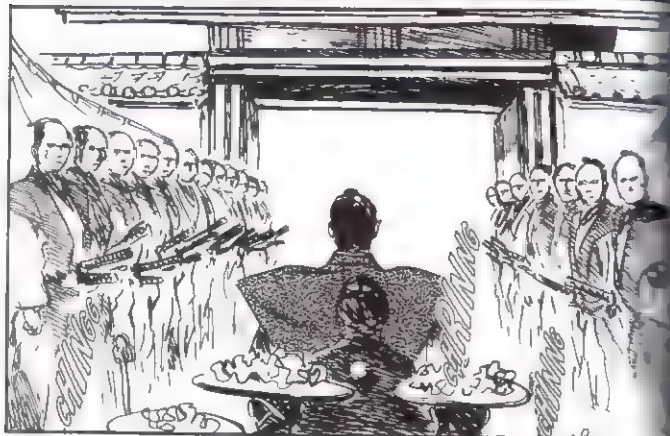
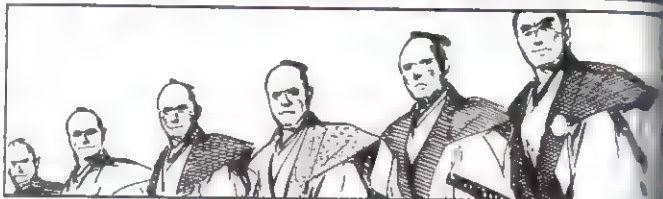


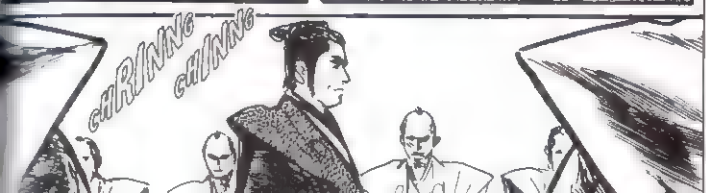
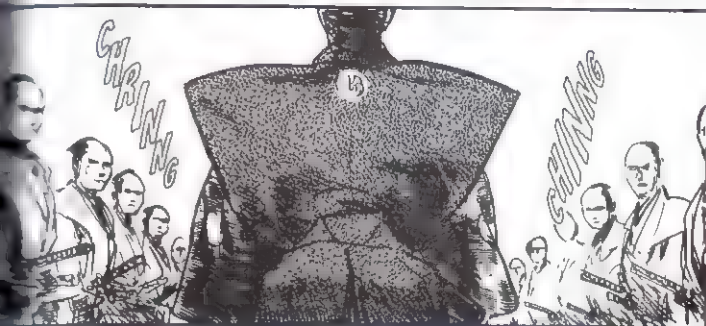














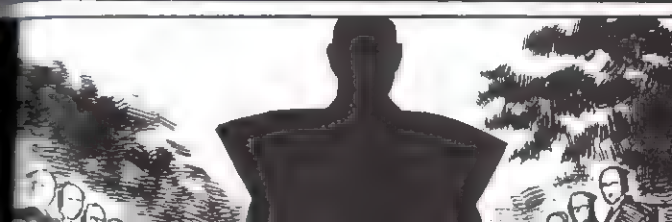
WHAT.
WHAT AN
INCREDIBLE
MAN!

EVEN THE
SAMURAI DON'T
DOUBT HIM. THEY
BOW...

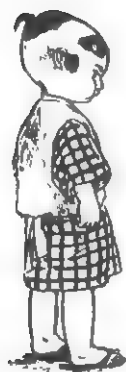
SO NATURAL,
SO REFINED...
HE MAKES THEM
BOW.

NO..
NOT THAT

IT'S WHERE
HE IS. HIS SOUL
IN A SPACE BEYOND
LIFE AND DEATH







*the hundred and
thirty-first*

Great Reversals



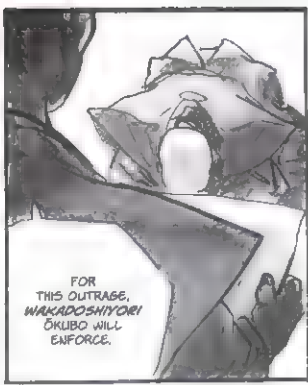




...HEEDLESS OF OUR
LORD'S SACRED PILGRIMAGE,
YOU ALLOWED A KITCHEN
FIRE TO CORRUPT THE PURITY
OF THE CASTLE.



FOR
THIS OUTRAGE,
WAKADOSHIIYORI
OKUBO WILL
ENFORCE.



SEPPUKU



SO SAITH
OUR LORD.

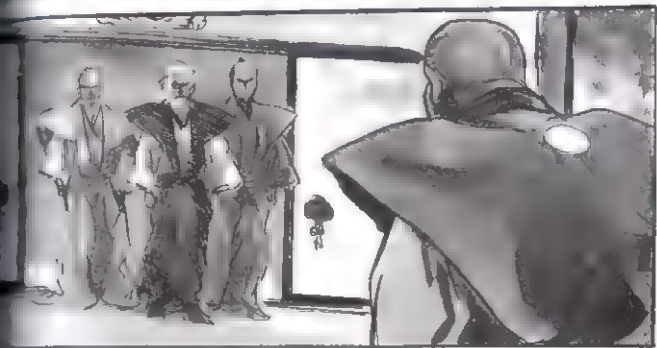


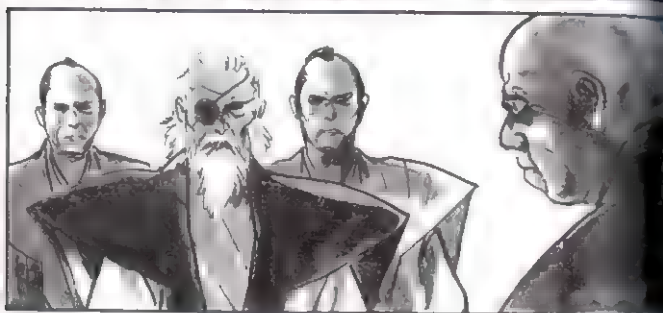
W WAIT!
I CAN
THERE'S..



...THERE'S
A LONG,
LONG STORY
BEHIND THIS!











**BACK,
WORM!!**



DISGUSTING



**IF IT
WASN'T
YOU...**

**.THEN WHY
TEACH ME
SEPPUKU
BEFORE IT
STARTED,
EHP!**

**YOU
FRAMED ME
RETSUDO**

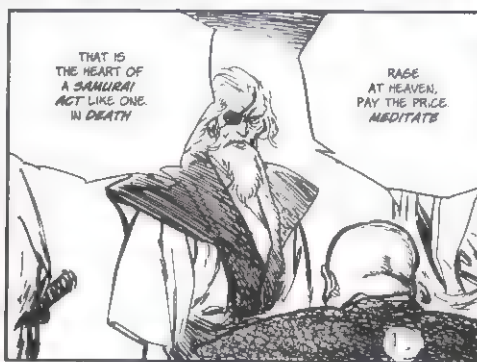


THANK
YOU DID
TO ME!

BUT DID
I ~~WEEPP~~ DID
I EVEN ~~ONCE~~
EXPLODE IN
ANGER?



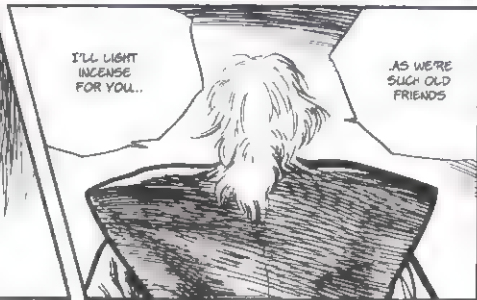
THAT IS
THE HEART OF
A SAMURAI
ACT LIKE ONE
IN DEATH



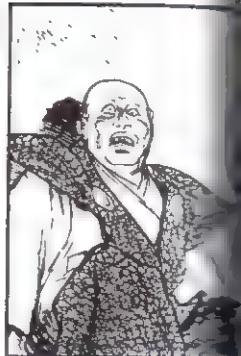
RAGE
AT HEAVEN,
PAY THE PRICE.
MEDITATE

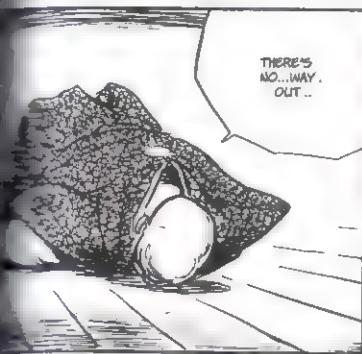
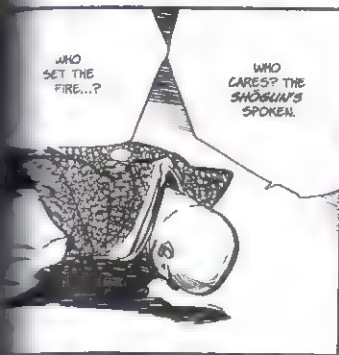


I'LL LIGHT
INCENSE
FOR YOU...



AS WE'RE
SUCH OLD
FRIENDS





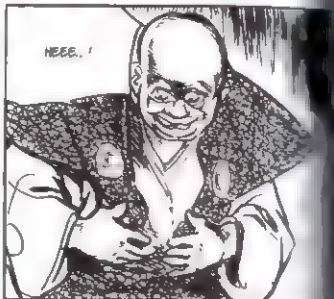


SEPPUKU...?
ME? CUT MY OWN
BELLY...?!

THE WAY
RETSUDO
SHOWED
ME. ?

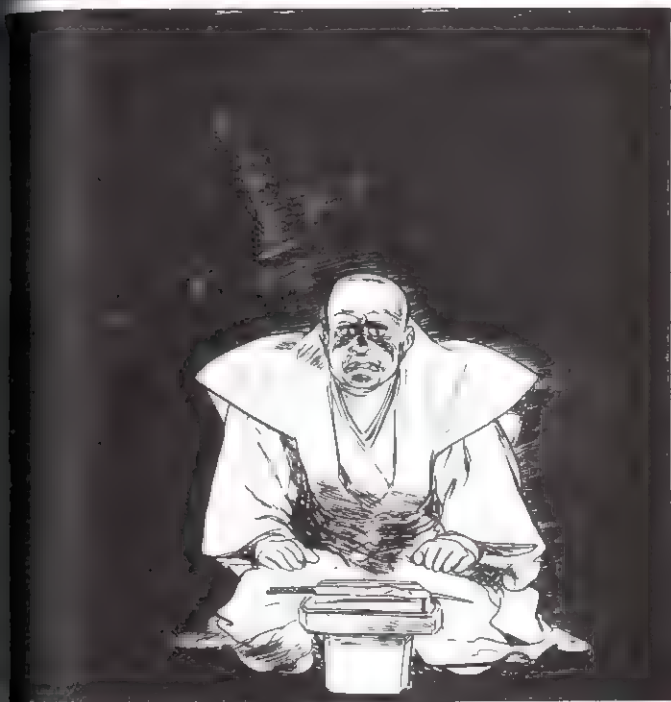
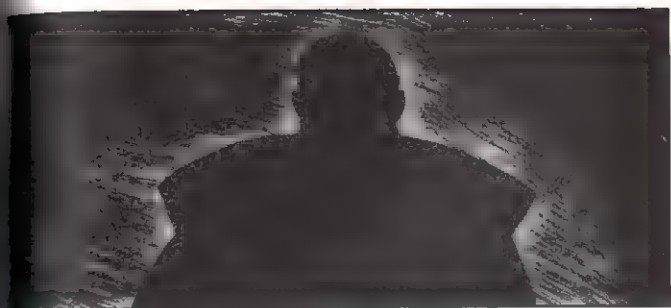


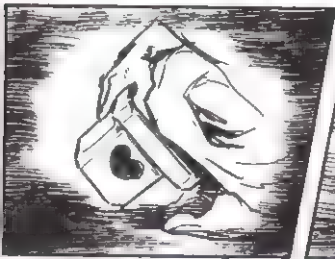
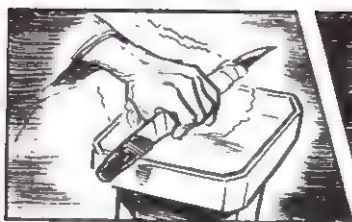
AHH HA HA
BELLY
C-CUT IT .



HEEE..!







THOO



A DREAM
LET IT BE
A DREAM!

TELL ME I'M
DREAMING..

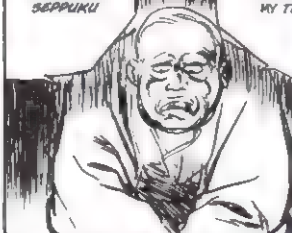




IT'S
NOT A DREAM. ?
IT'S REALLY
HAPPENING?



I MUST DO...
SEPPUKU



SEPPUKU
MEANS
MY TUMMY

MASTER, THE
WAKADOSHIMORI'S
PALANQUIN COMES
AT SIX PM.



OH GOD
OH GOD
OH GOD...





SO
WHA-
WHA!

STEADY,
MASTER...



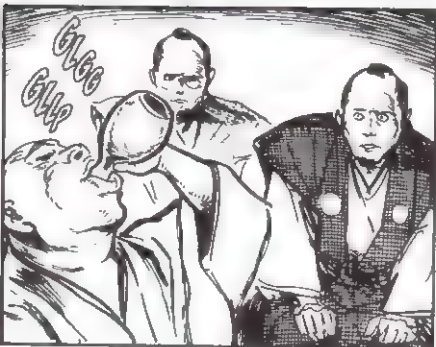
B-BRING ME...
SAKÉ...



GLRP GLRP
GLRP



FWHEW!

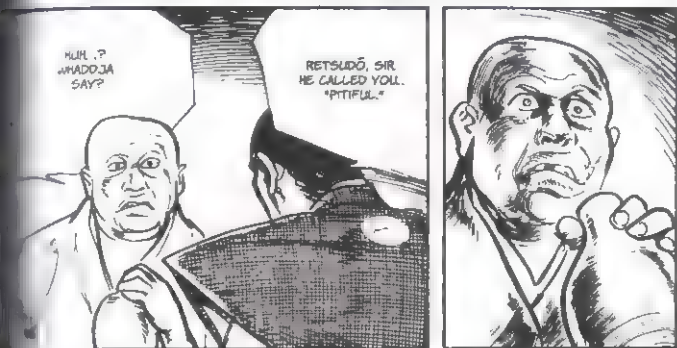


WE'RE CERTAIN RETSUDŌ
DID SET THAT FIRE, SIR
AND WHEN HE LEFT,
HE LOOKED AT YOU AND
CALLED YOU...



HUH? ?
WHADDJA
SAY?

RETSUDŌ, SIR
HE CALLED YOU.
"PITIFUL."



ME. ?
PITIFUL...?

HE CALLED
ME THAT. ?

Chah
Chah
Chah

BWAH
HAW HAW
HAW!

NYAHH
HAH HAH
HAH HAH!

HE THINKS
...PLAY
IS GAME?!

HA
HA
HA

HA
HA
HA

ABE TANOSHI?!
OUR LORD'S
TASTER?!
THE WORLD'S
GREATEST
POISONER?!

FOR
SAKE!

RIGHT
NOW!



I SAID
OUT!



HEH
IF RETSUDO'S
THE GREATEST
SWORDSMAN
I'M THE GREAT
POISONER! THE
SEPPUKU TRICK
GOT ME A BIT
UPSET



BUT THE HELL
I CUT THIS
BELLY OF MINE!
NOT FOR YOUR
AMUSEMENT,
RETSUDO!

I'LL
DRINK
MY OWN
POISON
BY GOD



KNIFE
TO THE
TUM-TUMP
TOO
SCARY!



BUT
POISON?
NOTHING
TO IT!

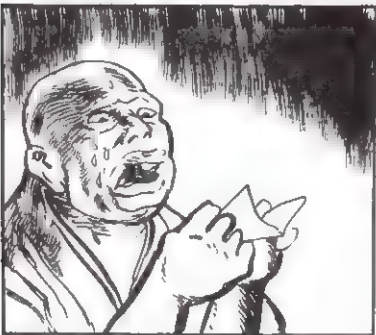
JUST
IN MY
SLEEP!

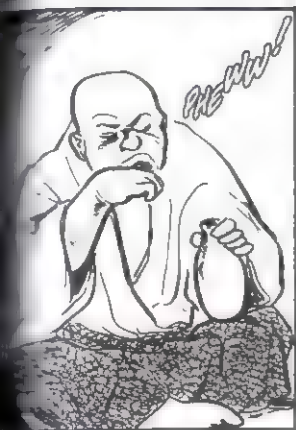
BWEEH
HEH HEH...

HAVING FUN
IMAGINING ME
WITH A SWORD IN
MY GUT? SORRY,
RETSUDO
YOU LOSE!

I'M A
POISONER,
NOT A
SAMURAI!

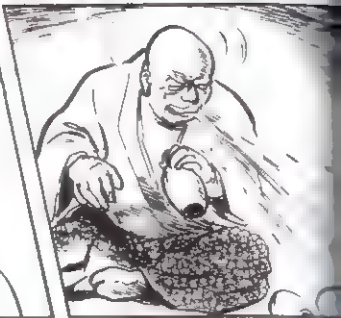






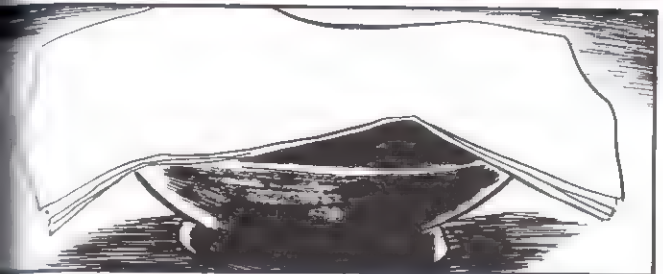
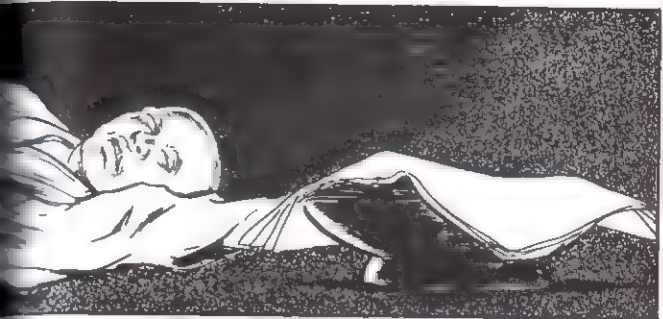


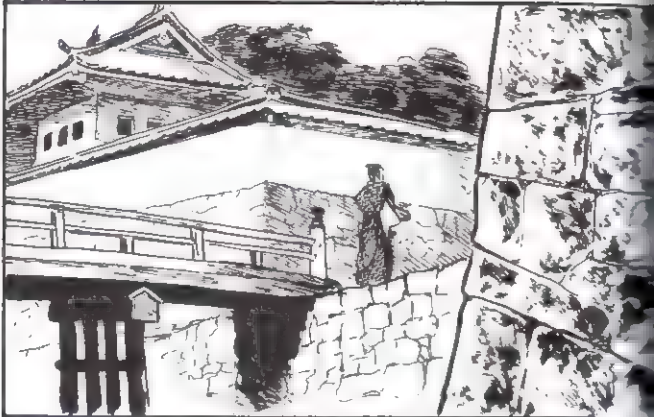




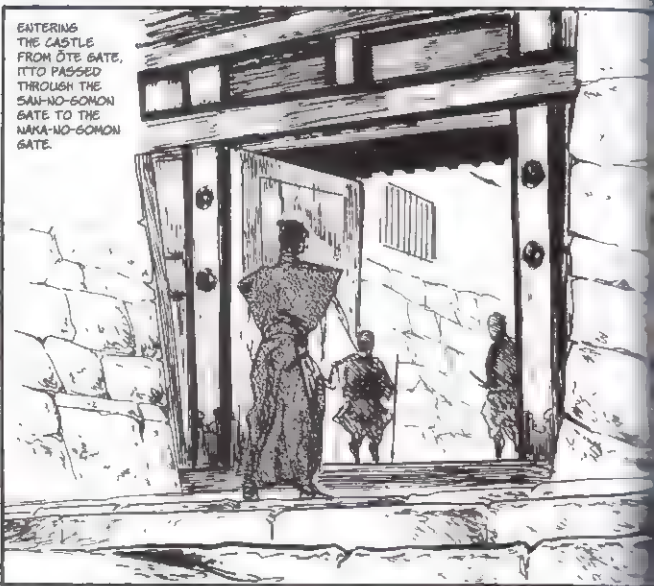


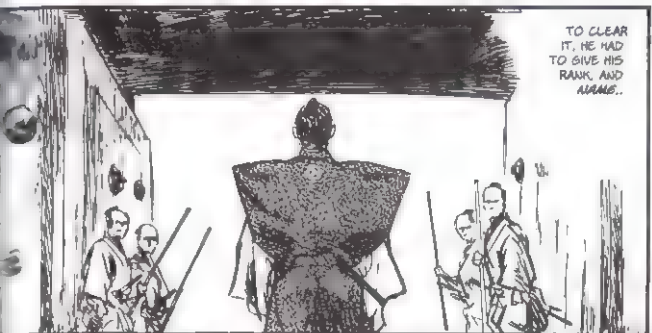
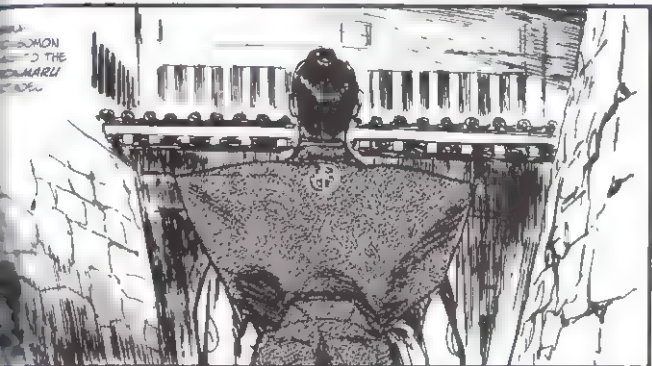






ENTERING
THE CASTLE
FROM ÔTE GATE,
ITTO PASSED
THROUGH THE
SAN-NO-GOMON
GATE TO THE
NAKA-NO-GOMON
GATE.





TO CLEAR
IT, HE HAD
TO GIVE HIS
RANK AND
NAME..







HE ACTED SO
NATURAL...

HOLD ON,
GUYS.

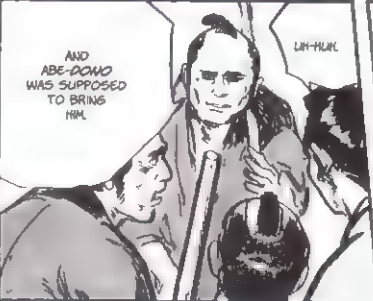
MAYBE
IT WAS
OGAMI-DONO
SO WHAT?



YOU HEARD IT,
TOO, RIGHT?
THE SHOGUN HIMSELF
SAID YAGYU SAMA
AND OGAMI-DONO
SHOULD MEET IN
THE CASTLE.

OH,
YEAH.

YEAH,
NOW -
REMEMBER

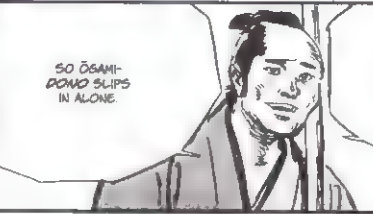


AND
ABE-DONO
WAS SUPPOSED
TO BRING
HIM.

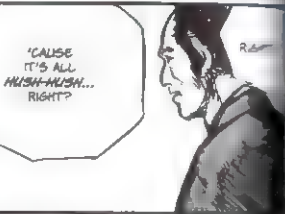
UH-HUH.



BUT NOW
ABE-DONO'S
GOING TO YOU
KNOW.



SO OGAMI-
DONO SLIPS
IN ALONE.



'CAUSE
IT'S ALL
HUSH-HUSH...
RIGHT?

RE

I CAN UNDERSTAND
OUR LORD WANTING TO
END THAT FEUD. FOUR
YEARS OF IT

AND THEY SAY
YAGYU-SAMA'S BEEN
TREATING THE RYUJŪ
LIKE DIRT...

OGAMI-DONNO
MAY BE DOWN AND
OUT BUT THEY STILL
NEED HIM.

HE DID
ASK ABOUT
YAGYU-SAMA...

AH! I SAID
ABE-DONNO'S
QUARTERS!

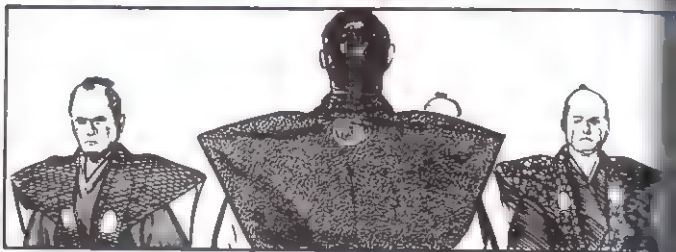
BUT
ABE-DONNO
DIES TONIGHT.
YAGYU-SAMA'S WITH
THE GO-RŪJŪ
NOW

IT'S OKAY
THEY'LL SET HIM
STRAIGHT.

SONNA
BE SOME
WORKS
"ONIGHT

YOU BET!
THE ANGRY WOLF
CHASES THE OLD
TIGER...

WHILE
KAI! TAKES
IT IN THE
GUT!



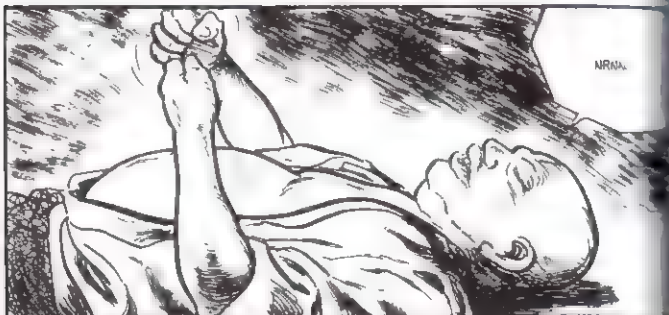
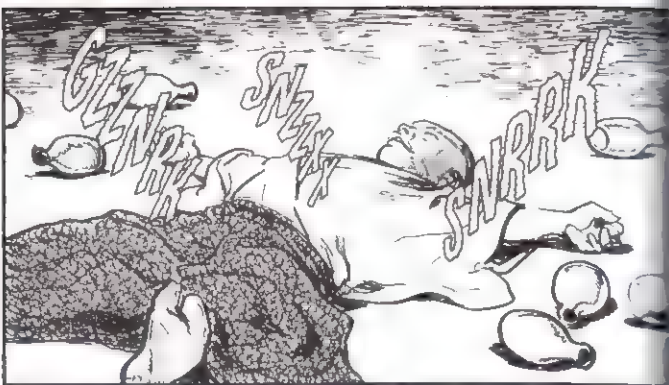
AS A STREAM
FLOWS FROM HIGH
LAND TO LOW,
SO ŌSAMI ITTŌ
MOVED THROUGH
THE CASTLE
LIKE WATER.

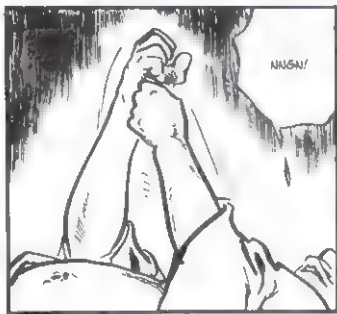
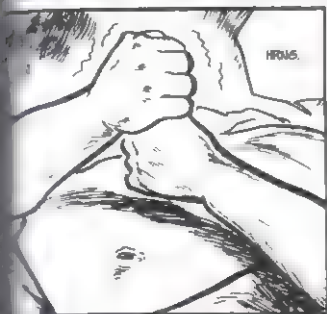
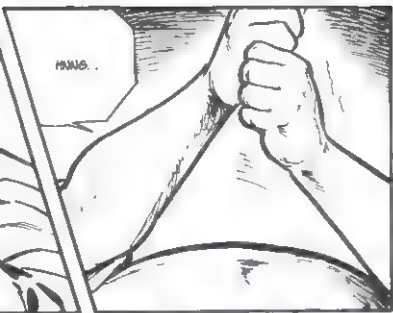


AS QUIET,
NATURAL EASE
REFUSED NO
DISTRUCTIONS AMONG
THE CASTLE SAMURAI
IT WAS IT IN THE
NATURE OF CASTLE
SECURITY TO CHALLENGE
NO QUESTION,
KNOWLEDGE,
BUT NOT
DELAY

AND NOW,
ITTŌ WAS
DEEP IN THE
HEART OF THE
HONMARU
KEEP







AAAAA---?!



DREAMING



BUT,
BUT SOON...
THE DREAM
COMES ..

.TRUE!



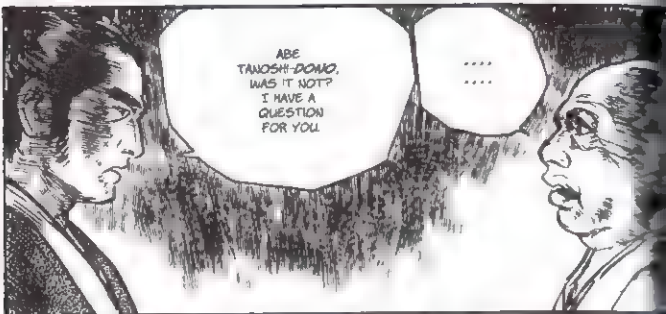
KSH







ARE YOU
A DREAM..
TOOP



ABE
TANOSHI-DONO,
WAS IT NOT?
I HAVE A
QUESTION
FOR YOU

....
....



WHERE
IS YAGYU
RETSUDŌ?



NAS
OUC

AUGH!!

Ô-ÔBAMI
ITTÔ!!



WH-WHAT
ARE YOU
DOING
HERE?!

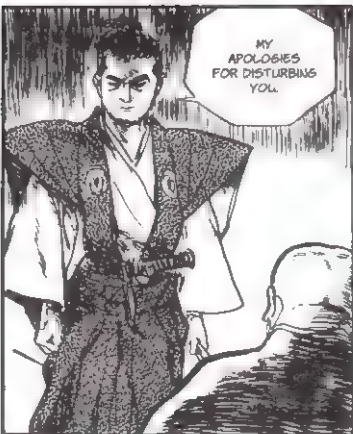
WHERE IS
RETSUDÔ?!



IN THE
SOUTH CHAMBER...
THE GO-RÔJÛ'S
ROOMS.

WHEN THE
TENKA FESTIVAL'S
OVER, THEY'LL MOVE
HIM AGAIN.





MY
APOLOGIES
FOR DISTURBING
YOU.



W-WAIT!
DON'T GO!



HELP
ME! SAVE
ME!

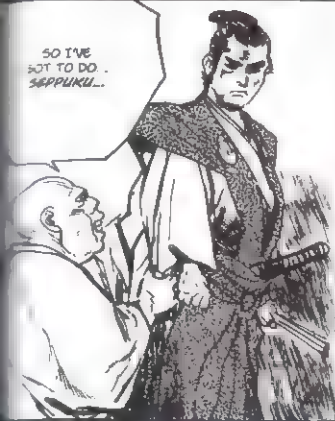


I ~~BEG~~ YOU!
RESCUE ME!



THERE WAS A
KITCHEN FIRE!
WHEN OUR LORD
WENT TO
TOSHOBU !!

SO I'VE
GOT TO DO...
SEPPUKU...



BUT...
RITSUDO
SET THE
FIRE!

TO
DESTROY
ME! HE
PLANNED
IT!



PLEASE,
SIR!

YOU COMING...
THIS MUST BE
FATE. BAH'SHI,
RIGHT?!

I DON'T
KNOW HOW
YOU GOT
HERE, BUT...



...YOU
CAN LEAVE
THE SAME
WAY!

I...I
BEG
YOU.

TAKE
ME WITH
YOU.

I
MEAN
IT!!

RETSUDÔ'S
YOUR SWORN
ENEMY!

IF IF YOU
RESCUE ME...
I'LL TELL YOU
RETSUDÔ'S..
MOST SHOCKING
SECRETS!

BETRAYING
OUR LORD
TRAMPLING THE
HOLLYHOCK
CREST..

THAT'S
WHY THE
GO-RŌJŪ
HAVE HIM!

OUR LORD
ORDERED
IT!

OUR LORD
WANTS YOU
TO FACE HIM.
IT'S YOUR
BEST CHANCE!

I'LL TELL
YOU ABOUT HIS
WEAKNESSES.
THE YAGYŪ
LETTERS.

IT'LL BE YOUR
SECRET WEAPON!
BURY RETSUDŌ!
REBUILD YOUR
CLAN!

SO IT
WAS YOU
WHO STOLE
THE WORM
WRITING?

ULP!

THAT'S...
RIGHT NEH.
FORGOT ABOUT
THAT



Y-YES!
I DID THAT!
BUT THERE'S
MORE!

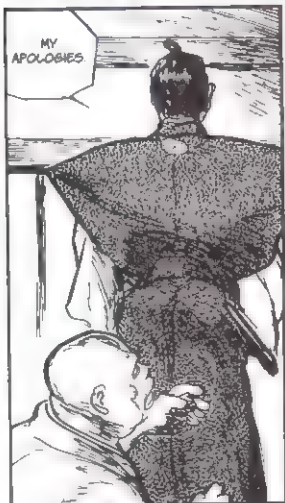
ALL
KINDS OF
EVIDENCE.
I HAVE
IT ALL!



AND IT'S
ALL YOURS!
JUST
HELP ME!



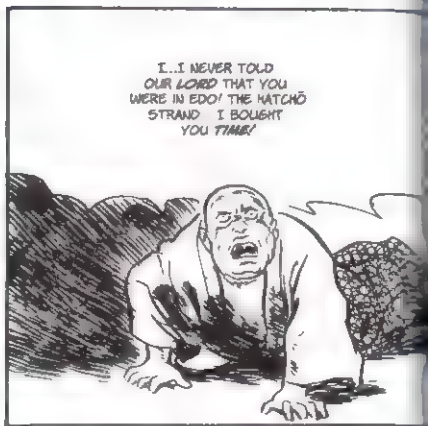
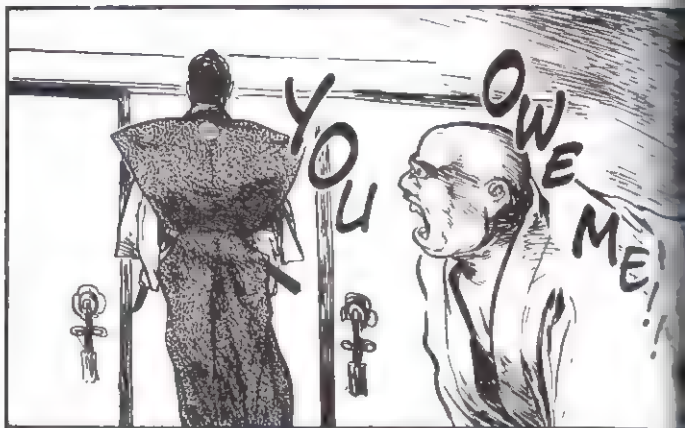
MY
APOLOGIES.



THE
PALANGUIN
IS COMING..
ANY
MINUTE!







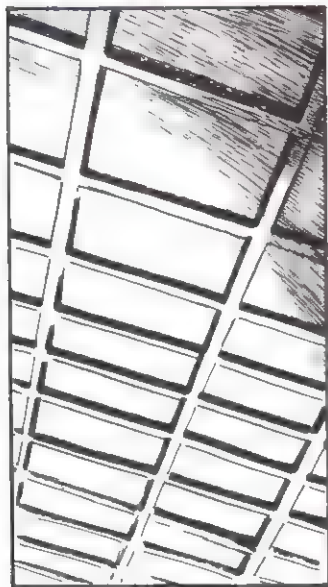
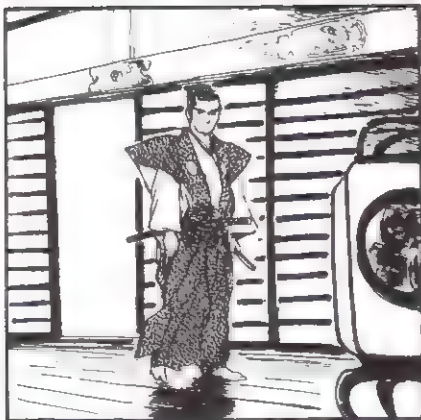
THEY'D HAVE
BEEN ON YOU
LIKE A SWARM
OF FLIES!

AND
AFTER YOU
SAW RETSUJŌ'S
DEATH!

YOU OWE ME,
YOU BASTARD!

GUARDS!
GUARDS!

LONG
WOLF'S IN THE
CASTLE!!





MASTER!
AHH
DOWN!!

IT'S LONG
WOLF!
OGAMI ITTÔ!
HE'S HERE!!

ARREST
HIM!!



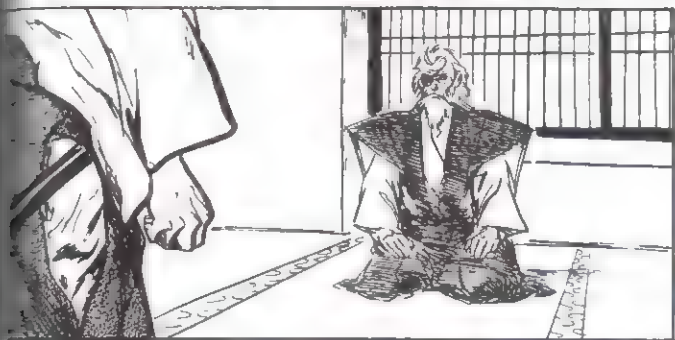
I'M SURE
IT WAS A
DREAM, SIR.

MASTER, THE
PALANGUIN'S
HERE.



THE...
PALANGUIN...?!







THANK
YOU



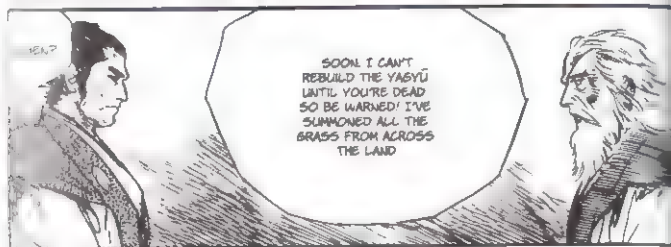
I'M
MYSELF
AGAIN



YOU
AWAKED THE
GRASS?

I DID

WITHOUT
ME, NO YAGYU
NO SHOSUN



END?

SOON I CAN'T
REBUILD THE YAGYU
UNTIL YOU'RE DEAD
SO BE WARNED! I'VE
SUMMONED ALL THE
GRASS FROM ACROSS
THE LAND



MY SPIRIT
IS BY THE
HATCHO



AND
ALWAYS WAIT
FOR ME!

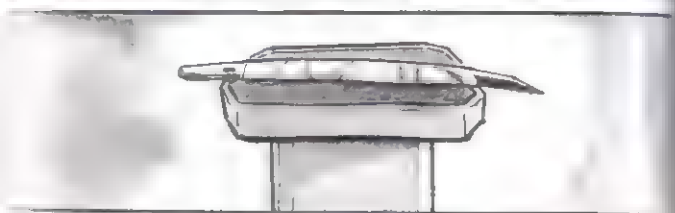
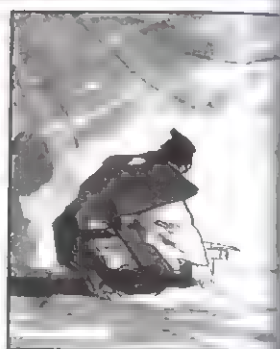
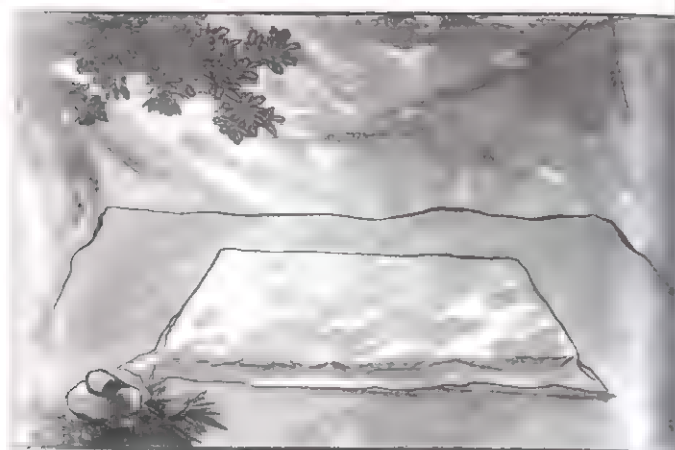


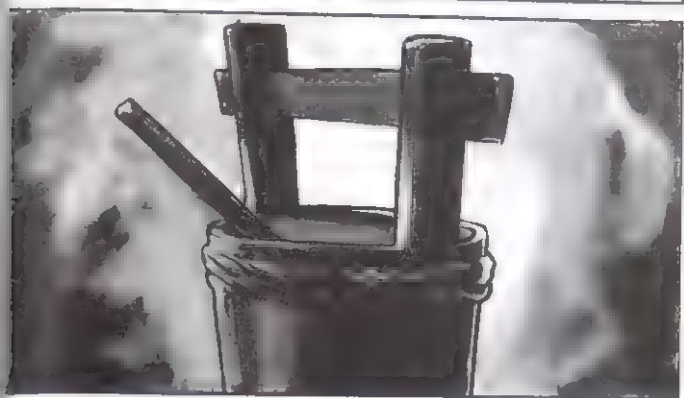
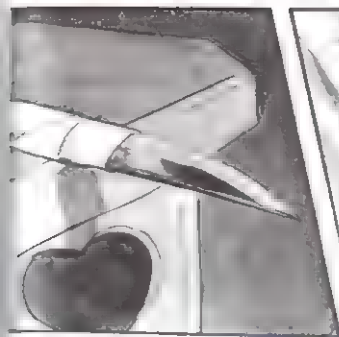
*the hundred and
thirty-second*

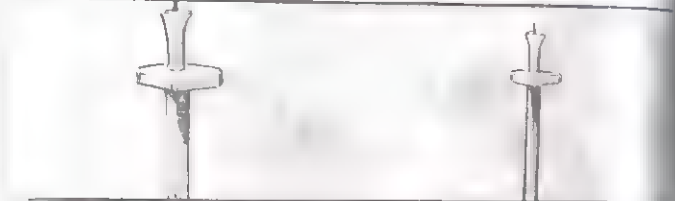
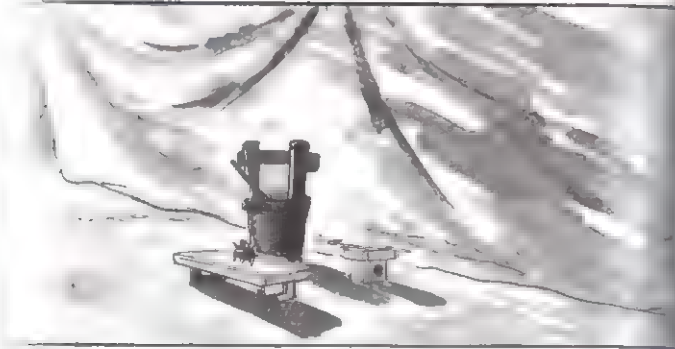
Scarlet
Summer,
Silver
Fall

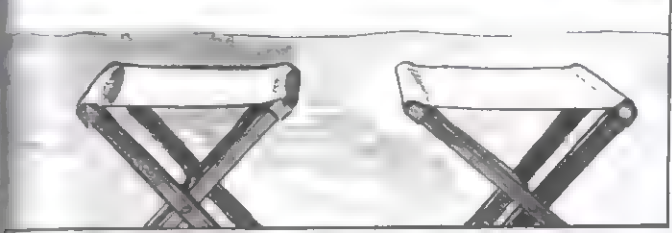


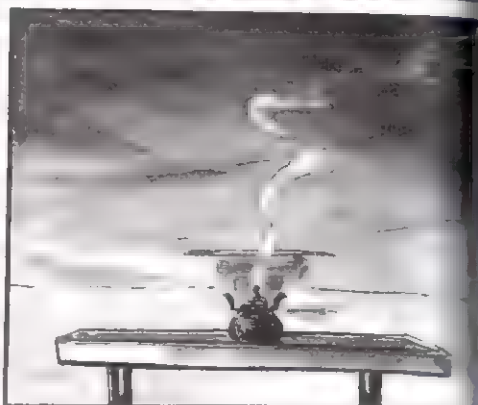
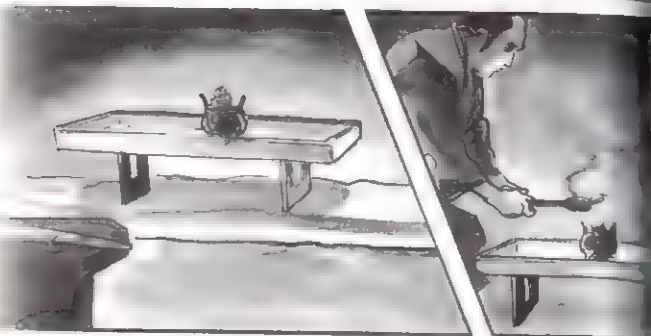
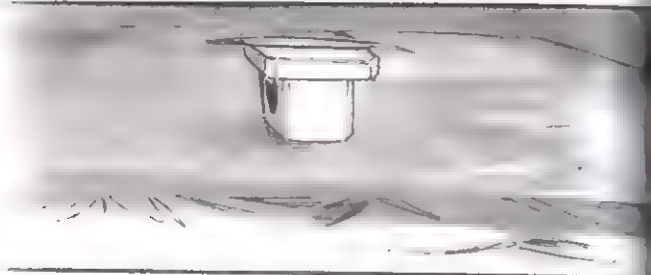


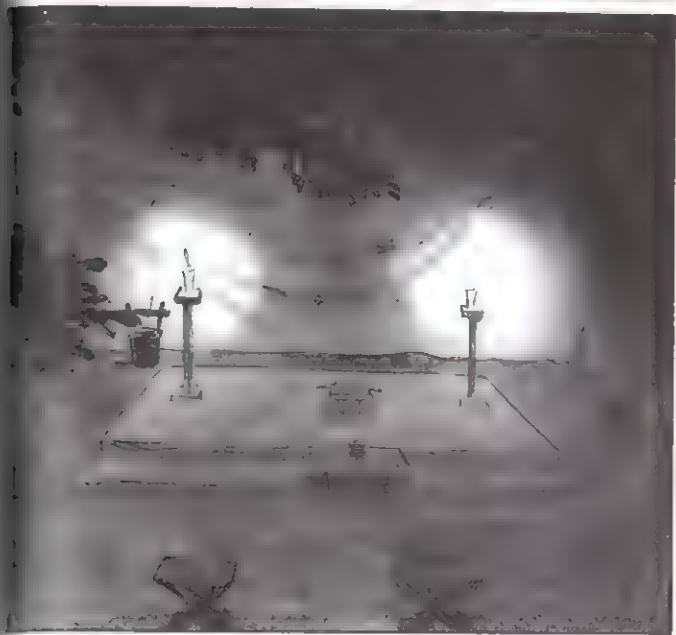
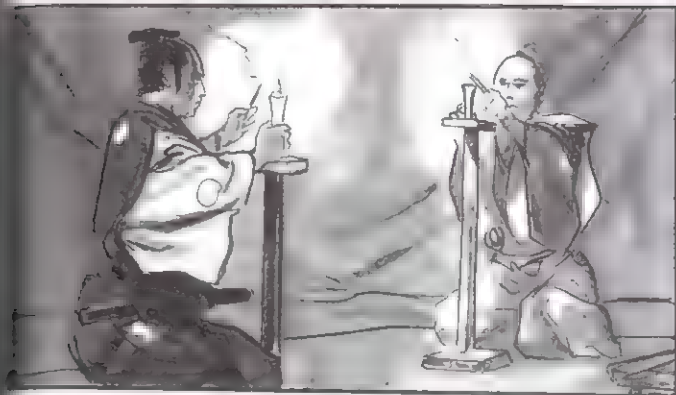


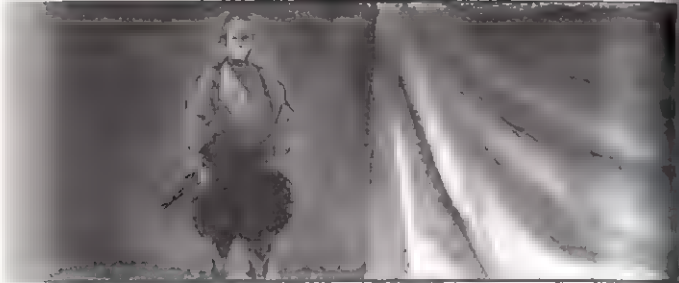




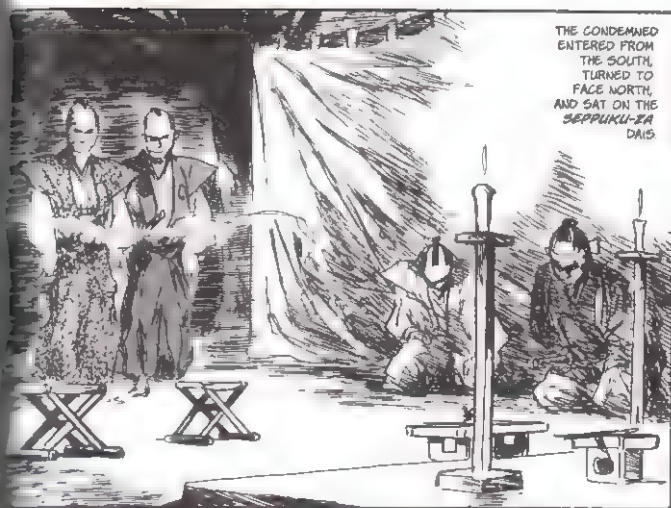




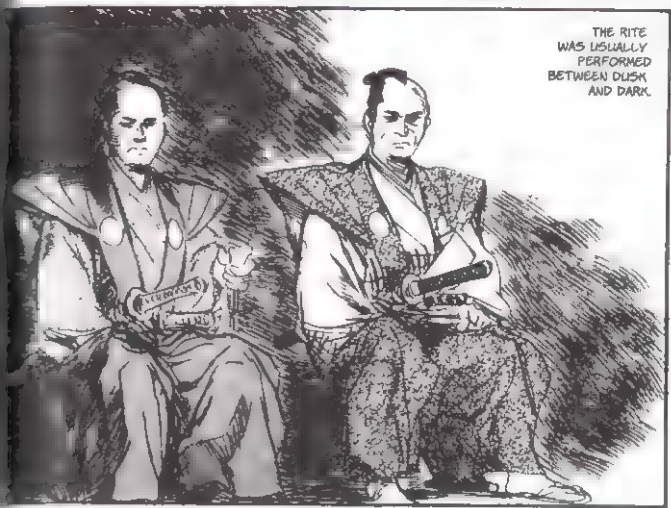


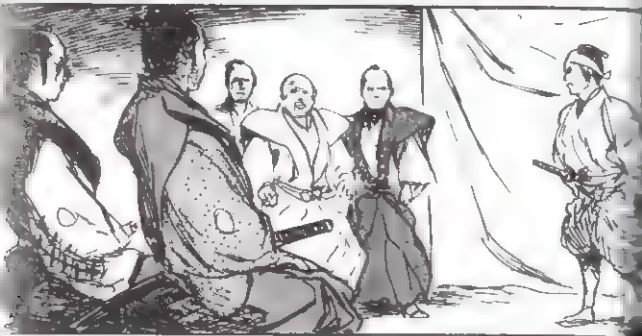
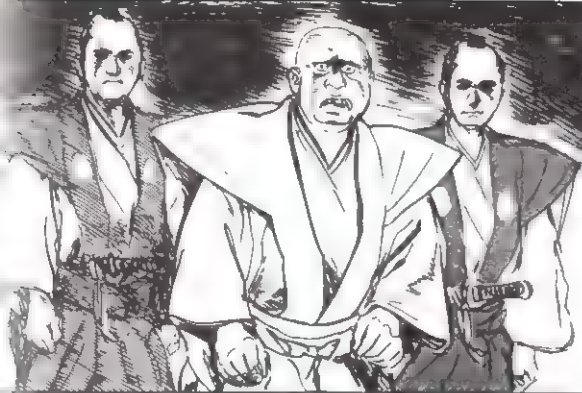


THE CONDEMNED
ENTERED FROM
THE SOUTH,
TURNED TO
FACE NORTH,
AND SAT ON THE
SEPPUKU-ZA
DAIS.



THE RITE
WAS USUALLY
PERFORMED
BETWEEN DUSK
AND DARK.







IN THAT CASE,
PLEASE HURRY THE
KENSHIVAKU IS
WAITING

AM.

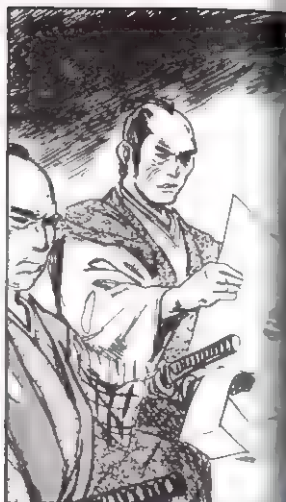
TURN
THIS WAY SUB
FORWARD

ALL
AAH

ALIGH!

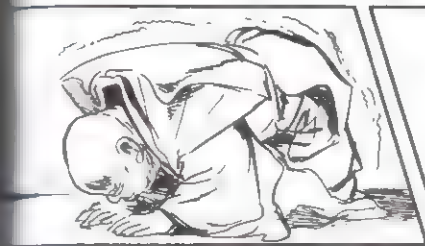
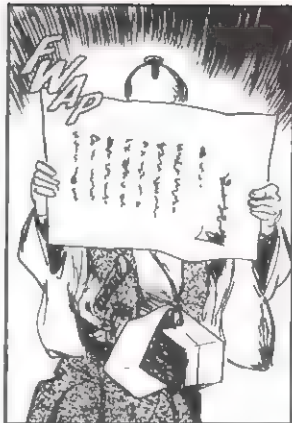
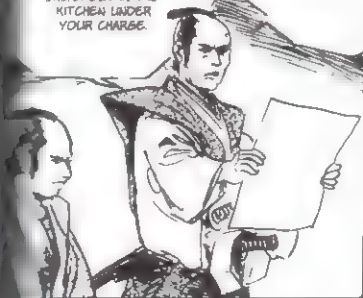
THEN
WE'LL CARE
YOU





NEEDLESS
OF THE SACRED
-RTY OF OUR LORD'S
-SRIMAGE TO TOSHOGU.
JU ALLOWED FIRE TO
BREAK OUT IN THE
KITCHEN UNDER
YOUR CHARGE.

THE
SENTENCE
IS DEATH, BY
SEPPUKU!



ABE-
SAMA!

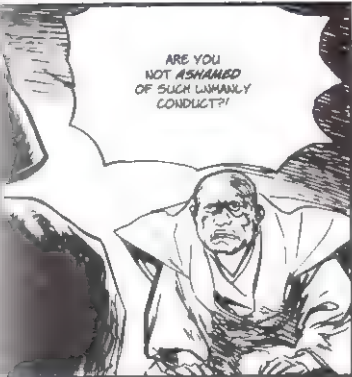
PLEASE
RAISE YOUR
HEAD.

PLEASE
RAISE YOUR
HEAD

PLEASE
TAKE THE
CUP

EMPTY THE
CUP IN TWO SIPS
THAT'S THE
WAY





ARE YOU
NOT ASHAMED
OF SUCH WOMANLY
CONDUCT?!

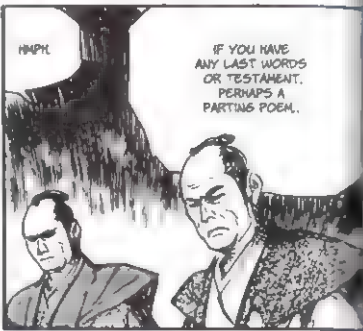


B-BUT . I .
I'M NOT A BUSHI!
NEVER . WANTED TO
BE A BUSHI...



YOU ARE
SAMURAI!!

LET IT
PASS, SIR.



HMPH

IF YOU HAVE
ANY LAST WORDS
OR TESTAMENT,
PERHAPS A
PARTING POEM.



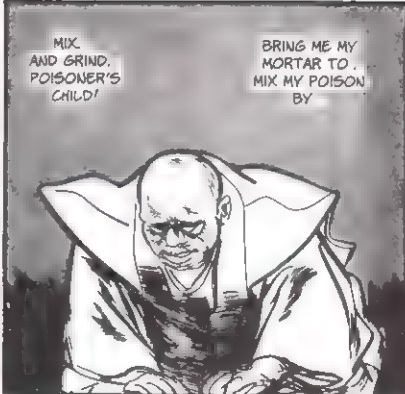
WGS .
RRGH..



GRIND...
AND MIX

MIX
AND GRIND.
POISONER'S
CHILD!

BRING ME MY
MORTAR TO
MIX MY POISON
BY



GRIND AND MIX
MIX AND
GRIND

MIX AND
GRIND



GRIND
AND MIX

MIX, GRIND
STIR!

POISONER'S
CHILD



PASS AROUND
THE SAKÉ CUP
TO DRINK YOUR
POISON BY

MOMMA'S MILK
SO SWEET
DRINK UNTIL
YOU DROWN

WAKE UP
WAKE UP
IN THE LAND
BEYOND THE
SKY



GRIND
AND
MIX...

GRIND
AND
MIX...



PREPARE
YOURSELF.
DONO!

FIRST,
BOW TO THE
KENSHIYAKU,
THEN OPEN
YOUR ROBE,
RIGHT TO LEFT

OR, IF
YOU PREFER,
SIMPLY SPREAD
THEM APART

PULL THE
TRAY CLOSER, AND
TAKE THE SEPPUKU-TŌ
IN YOUR LEFT HAND PLACE
YOUR RIGHT HAND UNDER
IT, AND RAISE IT TO
EYE-LEVEL.

TRANSFER THE
SWORD TO YOUR
RIGHT HAND STROKE
ABOVE YOUR NAVEL
THREE TIMES WITH
YOUR LEFT



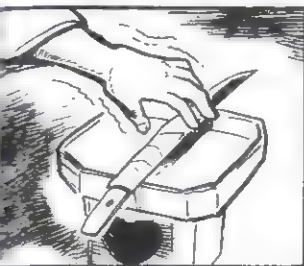
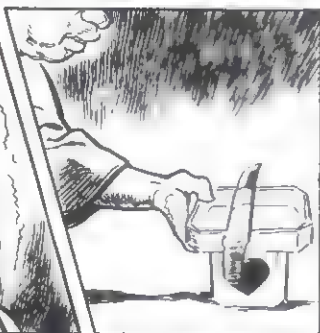
CALM YOUR
SPIRIT THEN
THRUST

UNDERSTAND?

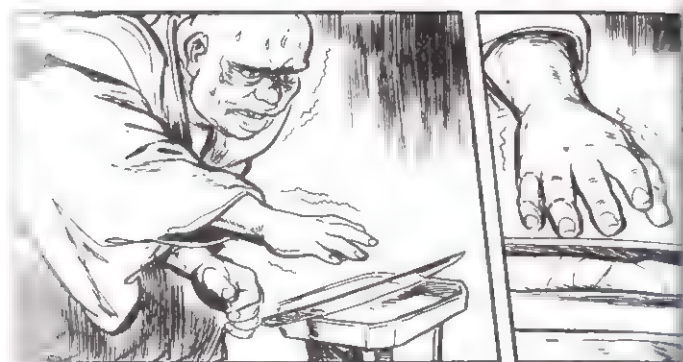
ABE-
DOWO...?!



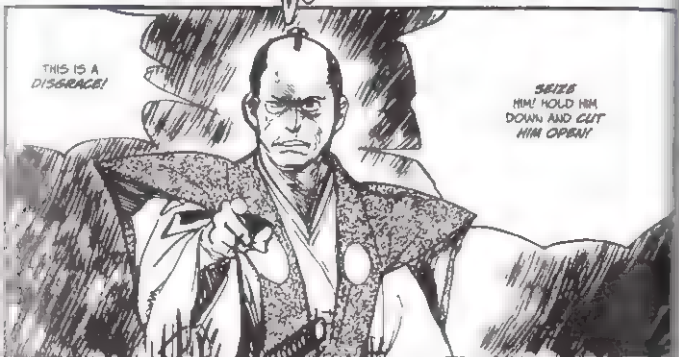
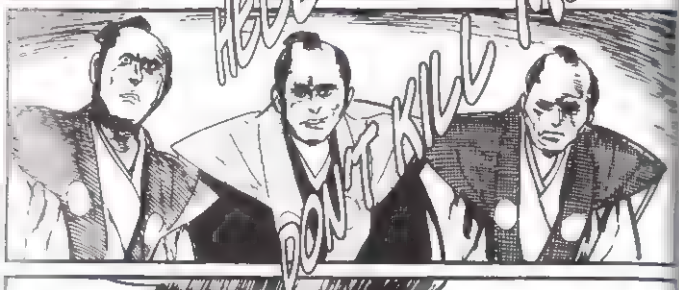
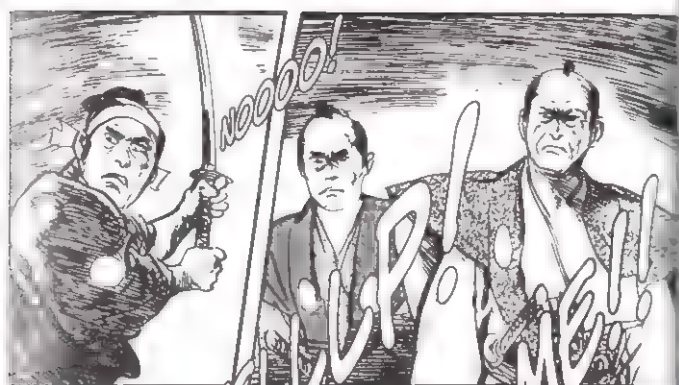
BEGIN!



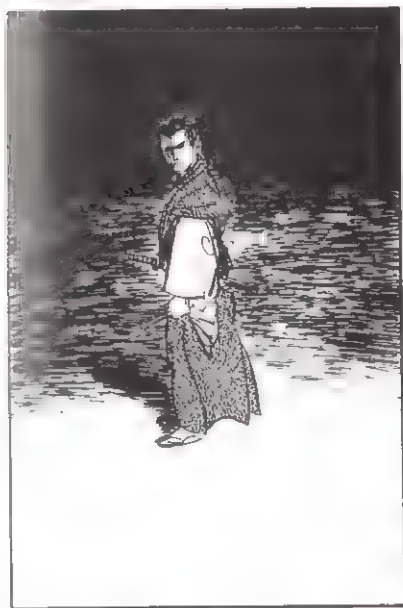
YOUR
OTHER
HAND.





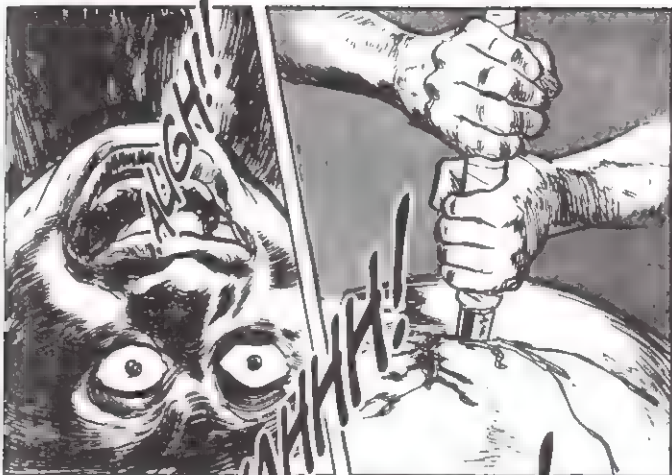


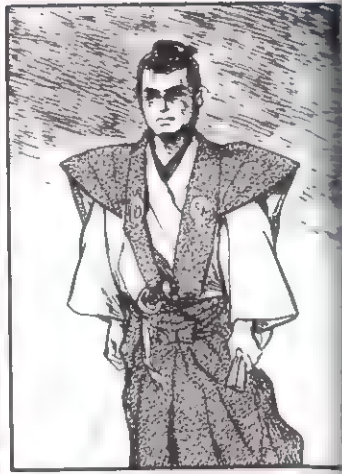


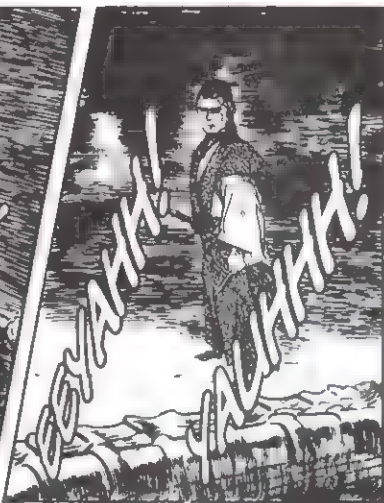
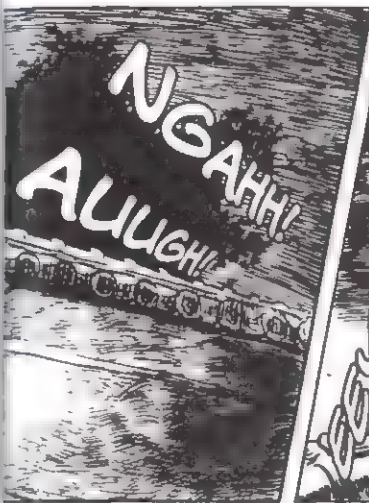






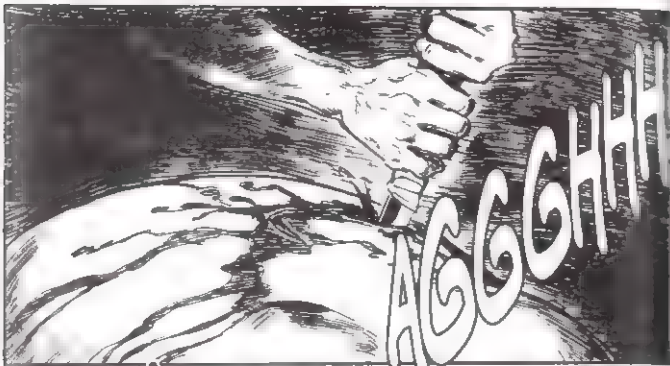




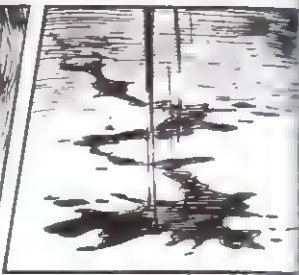












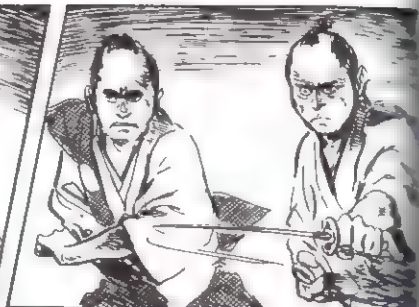
IT...
HURTS.

IT
REALLY
HURTS...!

ARE
YOU ALL...
CRAZY?
CUTTING
SOMEONE
OPEN .

IT ISN'T...
RIGHT!

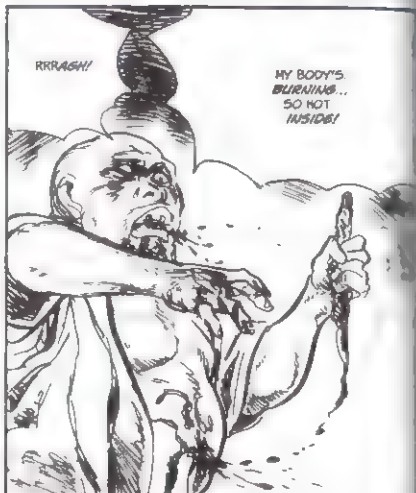
K-KILL
NIMI!



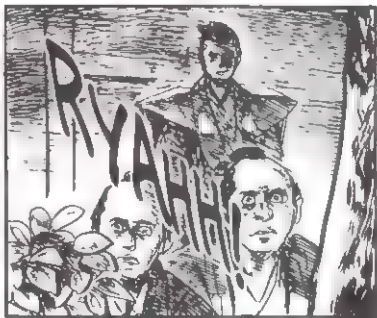
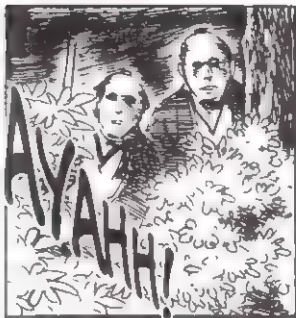
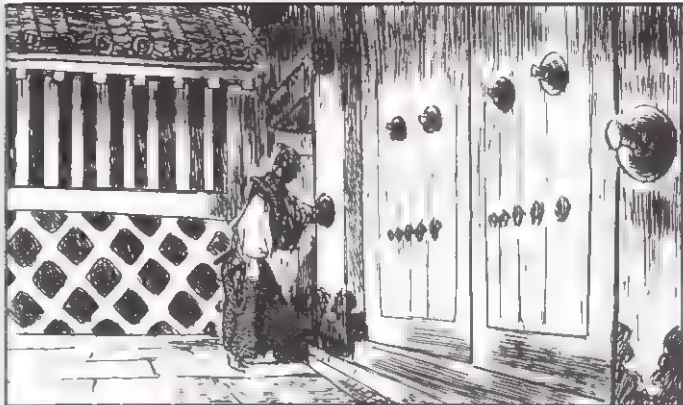
UNG
NNG



RRRAGH!



MY BODY'S
BURNING...
SO HOT
INSIDE!

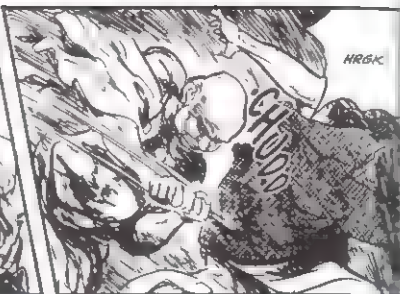


I SAID
KILL HIM!

CLIT HIM
DOWN!









MMG.

MMFF
MMH!



S
STOP!

K-KILL
HIM!



HFF
HANN!

SPIT PTCH!



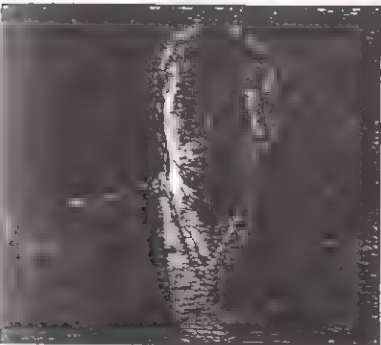


ALIGHKI!

GCHUK









...ITTO...?!



TIME FLOWS.
SEASONS TURN.

SCARLET
SUMMER SILVER
FALL BLACK
WINTER



THEN
AFTER THE
WINTER, GREEN
SPRING

PEOPLE
DIE, AND ARE
BORN AGAIN.

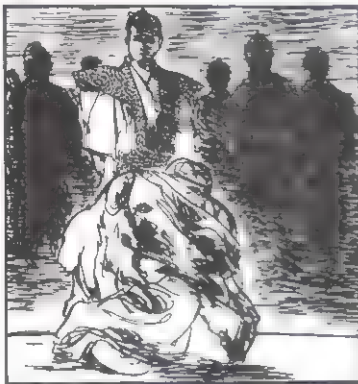


DON'T
FIGHT YOUR
FATE, YOUR
DEATH

IF YOU'RE *SCARLET
SUMMER*, I'M THE *SILVER FALL*.
RETSUDDO THE *BLACK WINTER*
WE ALL DIE, ONE BY ONE.
NO SALVATION.



BUT THE
WHEEL OF KARMA
CANNOT BE BROKEN.
AND SO I MUST
TAKE YOUR
HEAD



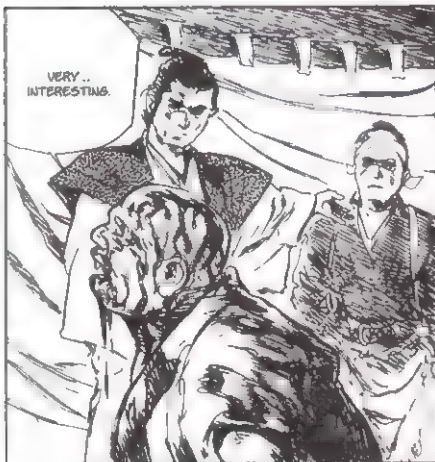
IN
THE CYCLE
OF REBIRTH...
ÔSAMU ITTÔ
GETS MY
HEAD?

HA
HA
HA
HA

EWAAH
HAH HAH!
INTERESTING!



VERY..
INTERESTING.



RETSUDŌ
SCHEMES,
ITTŌ CHOPS.

RIGHT.
SUMMER'S
OVER... YOU'RE
NEXT. AUTUMN...
THEN WINTER.

AT LAST,
ABE-NO-KAI
FELT NO
FEAR.

HE WHO COULD NEVER BE
A *BUSHI* HAD BUTCHERED
THREE ARMED *SAMURAI* WITH
HIS OWN HANDS. HE FELT
A PROFOUND SATISFACTION,
VERGING ON JOY. SCARLET
SUMMER... SILVER FALL...
BLACK WINTER. THERE HE
WAS—RANKED ALONGSIDE
ITTŌ AND RETSUDŌ.

BWEH
HEH
HEH
HA
HA
HA

FOR HIS
SECOND,
OGAMI ITTŌ...
KOBI
KAISHAKUNIN.



THE MAN WHO
COULD BE
NO BUSHI,
DISPATCHED
BY THE LAST
TRUE BUSHI'S
BLADE.

ABE-NO-KAI,
AS SINISTER
AS HIS
POISON.

YET,
SOMEHOW,
IMPOSSIBLE
TO HATE
THE CURTAIN
FELL AT
LAST ON HIS
UNEXPECTED



